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THE NOTE BOOK.

PRINTED BY L. B. SEELEY AND SONS, THAMES DITTON,
SURREY.





*"Open your eyes once more, - just once, - cried
the poor child:—*

page 208.

London, Published by R.B. Serlev & W. Burnside, 172, Fleet Street, Aug. 20th 1833.

THE NOTE BOOK

OF

A COUNTRY CLERGYMAN.

' Affliction then is ours.
We are the trees whom shaking fastens more,
While blust'ring winds destroy the wanton bowers,
And ruffle all their curious knots and store.
My God! so temper joy and woe,
That thy bright beams may tame thy bow.'

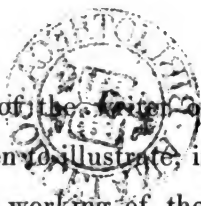
George Herbert.

PUBLISHED BY R. B. SEELEY AND W. BURNSIDE;
AND SOLD BY L. B. SEELEY AND SONS,
FLEET STREET, LONDON.
MDCCCXXXIII.

TO
THE LORD BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE,
IN WHICH HIS PARISH IS SITUATED,
THE NOTE BOOK
OF A COUNTRY CLERGYMAN
IS DEDICATED
BY HIS LORDSHIP'S FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED SERVANT,
A PRESBYTER
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



ADVERTISEMENT.



THE object of the writer of the following pages has been to illustrate, in some degree, the practical working of the parochial system maintained by the Church of England ; to follow into detail, and exhibit in action, the effect of the presence and influence of her clergy. In doing this he has recorded many facts which have happened to himself as the Minister of a country parish. He

does not, however, in giving these accounts to the press, claim for them all to be received as consistent with *fact*—but he believes them to be strictly accordant to *truth*. Such accounts could scarcely be made public consistently with propriety, without some alterations and disguise. He has picked out from his Note Book, relations which tend to illustrate the influence of the parochial minister, throughout different ranks, and in dissimilar circumstances, and upon various characters.

The subjects of the first two and of the last of these narratives are found in the humbler walks of life; but it is often amongst them that the most powerful passions are called into action, and the most affecting

and instructive displays of character exhibited.

In the others, the same influence is illustrated in connexion with the higher classes of society; and in these two relations, which may appear at first sight to be the most improbable in the volume, the agreement with fact is, on the contrary, the most strictly maintained.

The purpose of the writer will be abundantly answered, if by this imperfect exhibition of the moral and religious influence with which the Church of England pervades every part of our country, he shall lead any in these days of 'utility,' and 'expedience,' to value at a juster rate those inestimable blessings, which the

piety of our forefathers has transmitted to us, but which the sinful selfishness of a short-sighted generation threatens to destroy.

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THE NOTE BOOK.

MARRIAGE.

—————"Your heart was hard I fear—
Indeed 'tis true————

Truly friend,
For aught I hear, your master shews to you
More favour than you wot of. Mark the end.
The font did only what was old renew ;
The caldron suppld what was grown too hard.
The thorns did quicken what was grown too dull.
All did but strive to mend what you had marr'd,
Therefore be cheer'd, and praise him to the full,
Each day, each hour, each moment of the week,
Who fain would have you be, new, tender, quick."

HERBERT.

MARRIAGE.

CHAP. I.

EARLY DAYS.

A NICER looking couple than George and Mary Adams, never knelt together before the altar of our parish church to receive the marriage benediction. Nor were there often seen in our village, more kind greetings than those with which they were welcomed as they left the porch. They were, indeed, both of them, general favourites. They had always lived amongst us ; and there was not a more good humoured open-hearted lad in the village than George Adams : he was industrious too in the main, except when he was drawn from work by a fair, a revel, or some other country gaiety. He was,

upon the whole, sober; though cheerful company and high spirits led him sometimes into excesses, of which he was heartily ashamed afterwards. He was strong, too, and active; the cottage, of which he and his wife were to take possession, was adorned with many rustic luxuries—the fruits of his own recent providence; or the gifts of approving friends. Altogether he was quite a prize in the village: and in the opinion of most around them, few were more to be envied than the mother of one who had drawn so high a number in the lottery of husbands, as had fallen to young Mary Adams. But this opinion, though general, was not universal; and amongst those who did not entertain it, was one for whose full approbation of her marriage, Mary longed more than that of all the rest of the village together.

Her mother, who was now advancing in the vale of years, was one who had long learned to judge of matters by a very

different rule from that which most of her neighbours employed. Perhaps it was that she had been early left a widow, by a husband whom she had loved even from her infancy. This, at least, was the reason always given in the village, for the alteration which they could not but observe in the dame; she and her husband had been loved by all their neighbours, and when the evil day came, she had many thronging round her to give her comfort. All their kind endeavours, however, seemed to do her little good; and she felt herself that she was happiest, when the door was shut at night; and when, with the cradle, in which little Mary slept, near her, she could take down her husband's Bible, and read the sweet words which it contained, whilst no one observed the tears which ran down her cheeks, or the hands which were often clasped together, as if in a struggle between grief and prayer. Her neighbours noticed by degrees, how fond she seemed to be

growing of this quiet life ; and they were afraid that, if she mused so much over her sorrows, it would turn her head. But there was no such danger truly ; she was always glad to see me, and many a joyful visit did I pay to her cottage. For the Lord had indeed touched her soul, and she had found that consolation which he only can give to the sorrowing heart. The voice of her Saviour's sympathy was what soothed her grief, and he was gently raising again the head of the bruised reed. She came out of the furnace of affliction purified by its fires. She was seen again in the village, and mixed with her neighbours ; and though a touch of seriousness might always be perceived in the tone of her spirit ; though now and then even a tear might start into her eye, and though she was not the same light-hearted, gleeful spirit that she had been before, yet no one ever found her make them sad by her company. If the gaiety was less loud in her presence, it was

not less truly cheerful ; she was always welcome every where ; but in sickness or in sorrow, no one else could be thought of : her coming was like the cool breeze to the fevered head ; like the first dawn in the night tempest. Many an eye, when it saw, blessed her ; many a spirit at the last day will, I doubt not, bless her again, as having been to them in sorrow and in sickness, of a truth the messenger of peace.

Many were the village suitors who contended for her hand, but to all of them she gave the same answer. It was always kind, though it left them no hope of ever succeeding, and they all went away her friends ; her only earthly care seemed to be to provide for her child, and hard did she work to maintain her in comfort. No cottage was so clean as hers ; and as she grew up, there was not a tidier or better instructed girl in the parish than little Mary. Even from her earliest years, she heard of God her Maker, and Christ her Saviour ; and her

little hands were joined in prayer, night and morning, by her pious mother. It seemed that her labours and her prayers were not wasted ; for as little Mary grew up, her conduct made all who knew her, hope that she would be the staff of her mother's age. She was of a peculiarly gentle spirit, with a warmth of affection which secured the love of all who knew her. We hoped too, that there was more than this ; that she had indeed sought the God of her mother, and that the seed which was sown within her heart, though it might be checked at times by the waywardness of youth, would yet one day be ripened and matured to an abundant harvest. At the season of confirmation she was brought more especially under my care ; she was a ready learner of all that was to be learned ; and she seemed to feel deeply what ought then to be felt. She confessed the unworthiness of her best services, and with true sincerity she devoted herself to the service of her

God. Nor did the impression pass away, as it too often does, "like the early dew." It would be impossible to forget the joy which beamed in the countenance of her widowed mother, when a few months afterwards, Mary, having finished a course of preparatory instruction, presented herself at the table of the Lord to seal her former vows. After a while a place was found for her in an excellent family in the neighbourhood. The parting with her daughter was hard to the mother; but she had too long learned that the path of duty was truly the easiest to walk in, to hesitate for a moment upon the subject. Mary bore the highest character in her new situation. From time to time she visited her own village—and latterly the vigilant eye of affection had detected symptoms which made her mother fear lest her spirituality of mind should be in some degree injured, by the loss of that assistance which had helped to support her at home, and by the presence

of new difficulties and temptations. To other eyes there was not the smallest difference. Mary was praised by all—and whilst the widow heard these commendations with thankful pleasure, her own apprehensions only led her to be yet more earnest in prayer for her beloved child.

At one of these visits it was observed that George was more than heretofore in her society, and her mother perceived that she was fonder of his company. She immediately spoke to her upon the subject; for it had always been her endeavour to make her child her friend, and they had no secrets from each other. She set before her the character of George. She asked her ‘whether he was one who would lead her in the narrow way?’

‘Oh, my child,’ she would say to her, ‘you cannot well think what a hindrance it would be to you to be married to one who did not truly love your Master. I have seen many such matches; and I never saw

a happy one ; either the flame of godliness was damped, and for aught we could see, put out in the wife ; or it was through a sad and a bitter path that she walked.' Never, my child, never let me see you give your heart to one who does not fear and love God.'

Mary loved her mother ; she knew that she was right, and she resolved to act upon her opinion ; and when George soon after spoke to her of marrying, she told him how her mother felt, and added that she could never think of marrying him. George promised that he would be a steadier man, that her mother should see him so much altered, that her objections would be given up ; and Mary was not quite so firm in her refusal as she had been ; and though she would not withdraw it, yet George thought that he had ground for hoping that the day might come when she would. He loved her much ; and this was motive enough to lead him to be more attentive to all his

duties than he had been. All the neighbours remarked how regular George was become at church,—how steady in his work ; whilst his alehouse friends tempted him in vain to join them ; he even stood pretty well the jeers in which their invitations ended.

During her occasional visits to her mother, Mary of course met him, and heard of his improvement. It was not without disquiet that the widow viewed the progress of his intercourse with her daughter. But she thought that the course which wisdom prescribed to her, was to take no direct notice of the matter. Her daughter, she was sure, saw in her silent observation of all that passed, abundant testimony of her unchanged opinions. There was, however, meanwhile a slow and gradual alteration in Mary's own feelings. She was becoming more and more attached to the young man. She could not exactly approve of her inclination to retract her refusal, but she had not strength of principle enough to act up to

what she knew to be right. Thus conscience was wounded ; and this, as it did not open her eyes at once to her real state, began directly to impair the spirituality of her mind. Indulged sin was beginning to separate between God and her soul. The next step was to endeavour to quiet conscience, first, by turning her eyes away wilfully from its suggestions ; and then, after a while, by discovering answers to them. It was when her mind was in this state, that her mother first renewed the subject with her.

‘ George Adams is much improved, my dear, during the last year.’

Mary, who was working near her mother, did not dare to look up ; but busying herself more earnestly than ever, merely answered, ‘ Yes, mother ; every body says how much better he goes on now.’

‘ Do you think, Mary, that there is any seriousness of mind about him ?’

‘ I should think so ; how regular he is at church !’

‘It is easy to be regular at church, Mary, whilst the heart is not given up to God. Does he ever talk to you about what you used to love to speak of to me?’

Mary’s countenance crimsoned over, for conscience told her the full meaning of her mother’s speech. The old woman laid down her knitting, and looking at Mary, said, ‘Come, my dear child, you and I must always be frank with one another; do you wish to change your mind about marrying George?’

Mary made no answer.

‘My dear child,’ said the widow, ‘you well know what my love is toward you; God grant that it be not too great. I fear that you have been by little and little changing your mind about him—and yet, Mary, is his heart changed? Is he a companion fit for eternity? Oh, my child, if you marry one who does not truly fear God, what sorrow will you bring upon yourself! If you are, as I trust you are,

one of God's children, you will bring many afflictions upon your head ; for you will need them to prevent your fixing your heart upon this world ; and oh, if it should be the means of drawing your heart away from God, and making you forget all you have felt and resolved,'—

The old woman was stopped by the force of her feelings ; Mary too was in tears. She threw her arms round her mother's neck, and would have promised her any thing, to comfort her then.

' No, Mary,' said her mother, ' I would not have you promise me now any thing which you will hereafter repent of having said. Think over it, my child, and pray over it ; and I will speak for you to our minister about it, and he shall advise you what to do in the matter.'

Mary could not but consent to this, because it was her mother's wish, though she could scarcely bear to have it mentioned to another. For she could hardly hide,

even from herself, the testimony of her conscience, or the consciousness that her inclination was likely to prove too strong for her principles.

It was not long before the matter was mentioned to me, or before I found an opportunity of conversing with Mary. I could do little else than repeat her mother's warnings. The young man was undoubtedly improved for the time; but there was no appearance whatever of any real change in his character, of his heart being converted to God; and earthly affections, as I told her, were poor things to build upon for comfort here. How too could she expect happiness in a marriage with one who, if she sincerely wished to serve God, could have no community at all of feeling, in what must be most important in her eyes?

She took my advice kindly, with many tears; and I believe many resolutions of acting up to it; and we parted with an earnest prayer for her, that she might

‘perceive what she ought to do, and also have grace and strength faithfully to perform the same.’

In less however than a year from this time, with a stifled conscience, and with the consent, though not the approbation of her mother, she agreed to become the wife of Adams. When it was once settled, her mother wisely forbore all further opposition ; and she joined with me in praying that a blessing might still be vouchsafed to her beloved daughter.

CHAPTER II.

SUNNY DAYS.

ADAMS and his wife were now established in their cottage, and all around them bespoke a more than ordinary degree of comfort. The widow was often with her daughter, endeavouring to improve every thing to her spiritual good. Whenever I visited them I was always welcome, though I felt that Mary's manner was constrained towards me. I knew that this was owing to the uneasiness of her conscience, and the feeling that she had acted contrary to my advice, and to her mother's wish. Her religious character was evidently lowered. But it was, she perhaps thought herself, no

more than the necessary effect of her increased cares and new situation. She hoped that some day or other she should be able to converse with her husband as she had been used to do with her mother upon spiritual things. There were indeed times when conscience *would* speak; when she was forced to cast restless glances inward; and when the effect of this was visible in uneasiness of mind. But for the most part she was still evidently quieting conscience; and external prosperity enabled her to do this the more easily. All things went well with her outwardly; the affection of her husband appeared to be undiminished; his habits of life in the main preserved their improved tone. He had work in abundance, and health to enable him to perform it; and her children, of whom she had now three, were remarkably healthy and intelligent. Often would her pious mother remind her, that these days could not last for ever, and exhort her earnestly to be "laying up her

treasure in heaven and not upon the earth.” She would listen attentively to all that was said to her, but it evidently fell upon different ears than those which used to drink in the holy words of her beloved mother.

CHAPTER III.

STORMY DAYS.

IT was shortly before the birth of her fourth child that these bright days began to cloud over. Her mother, who had been growing very infirm of late, fell really ill, and was confined entirely to her bed. Mary watched with a full heart her declining strength ; and nursed her with continual and careful affection. The old widow would often look upon her in silence for minutes together till the tears chased one another down her cheeks. Her great delight was to get her daughter to read the word of God to her. At last she said to her one day, ‘ Mary, I shall be but a short time longer with you,

and I must tell you what my heart has long been full of. I fear, my girl, that your affections are being by little and little weaned from heavenly things. Your conscience has been uneasy ; and this has made prayer, and reading God's book for yourself tiresome to you. Oh, Mary, remember how we have prayed together and read those blessed promises ; now listen to your dying mother,—there is nothing but these hopes which can bear up our souls when we come to die : then there is nothing in the world worth a thought, but being indeed at peace with the great God through Jesus Christ. Pray that you may not be left to wander from God ; and when I am gone think over these things : return to God indeed, and beg of him, if you have done amiss, to enable you to come to him again, as a penitent child, through your Redeemer. And if he sends afflictions upon you—and I cannot help having a sort of feeling that troubles will come upon you—oh, do not

let a hard heart keep you away from him ; but cast yourself before him ; and pray that you may be enabled to return to him. It may be, Mary, that the troubles which he sends you will prove your choicest blessings.

She spoke more to her oftentimes to this effect while her strength lasted—for it was but a few days after this, that though her lips moved, and though her voice could be heard doubtless by the angel messenger who was waiting for the dying saint, yet to us who stood round her bed no sound was audible. Calmly and sweetly she breathed her last :—prayer was her latest occupation—her eyes followed the daughter of her love, until it seemed as if they were fixed on something which we saw not—and then with her mild features kindling into the expression of praise, she peacefully yielded up her soul into the hands of her Redeemer.

As I knelt beside her bed in prayer with the family, and heard her daughter's heart-

breaking sobs, earnestly did I pray that this might prove that loving correction which should bring back again the wandering child to her Heavenly Father. And such did seem to be its effect: the lessons which she had learned around her mother's bed, and over her open grave, were written deeply upon her heart. And had her husband been one who would have led her on, who can say but that even her burdened conscience would have found relief in her full return to her 'first and early love.' But all that she met with from Adams was, in fact, injurious to her. He endeavoured to dispel her grief, by leading her by degrees into amusement. The wholesome lessons of sorrow were gradually effaced, the opportunity of good was lost—and this chastisement had evidently passed over her and left its purpose unfulfilled. In the season of affliction, she had resolved to attend again at the Lord's table; but before the next time when it was administered, the freshness of

her thoughts of good was passed, and the business of the family and other real difficulties appeared to her to be insuperable hindrances.

I saw less and less of her—she did not seek to meet me ; and though I hoped earnestly that the time might come when I could promise myself some benefit from my visits to her, I thought that this was not that season. The chilling frost had thrown its icy mantle over the upper surface at least of that fresh stream of affections which in youth had flowed so freshly. My trust was, that it might yet melt away, and leave the water to its true and happy motion.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE TRIALS.

THE next few years of Mary's life were not marked by any uncommon feature : she had indeed some trials to which she had hitherto been a stranger. The last infant had never known the health with which her elder children had been blessed ; when about nine months old, it had suffered severely from fits—and many a bitter hour did its mother spend in watching over it. Like every true-hearted parent, she was taught by the voice of God within her to love with deeper tenderness the sickly little one who needed all a mother's care,—she succeeded in keeping alive the faint spark of life, and

the bodily health of the child had of late strengthened, though all but its partial mother saw but too evident symptoms of the injury which her mind had sustained. She was not, however, yet of an age to make this painfully certain, and Mary never doubted but that restored health would leave her darling clear of all infirmity.

It was five years after her mother's death when sickness again visited her family. Her husband was attacked by a painful and lingering fever. It left him, after many weeks of harassing anxiety, feeble and dispirited. Times were hard,—and his lost time pressed heavily upon the spirits of Adams. He returned to work with a heavy and desponding mind,—his rent was in arrears, and his landlord talked of finding another tenant,—his credit at the village shop was almost gone. He was not a man to bear up against such difficulties as these ; he had not the spring of true piety, which shews more nobly perhaps in the poor man

struggling against the hard waves of the stormy sea of want, than in any other ordinary circumstances.

The cold weather came, and the little corner of his garden which had always held his stack of faggots was empty ; it was hard to see his wife and children pinched by cold, and the hand of Adams was raised against his master's hedges. An inexperienced purloiner is commonly awkward, and the guilt of more cautious theft was laid upon him.—The consequence was, that he lost, after some angry words, a master whom he had long served—and set out with a soured temper to find (no easy matter) a new employer. After an idle day, as he passed sullenly by the public house, he heard in it the sounds of mirth, and almost without a thought he rushed into it. He was welcomed by some of his old companions ; their fare was forced upon him, and its effect upon one now unaccustomed to it soon drove from his mind the feelings of shame which

had risen upon him when he found himself again where he had been so long a stranger.

In the corner of the fire-place, and next to Adams, sat one with whom he had never been on terms of intimacy. Lowe was a man who seemed always to have money at command and yet to do nothing wherewith to earn it;—his character, therefore, was not of course good, and Adams had always shunned him: now, however, he was by little and little engaged in conversation with him: he had told him his difficulties—his wrongs—his want of work. Lowe sympathized with him; was indignant against his master; and ventured at last, when, from Adams's raised tone it seemed as if his head was not altogether clear, to hint darkly that there were still means by which he might regain his former prosperity, and that honestly enough if he had the heart to make a venture;—his hearer, however, shewed no inclination to take the hint, and Lowe was too crafty a tempter to shock his drowsy virtue

by pressing him to take a step for which he was not yet prepared.

Adams declared his intention of seeking for work on the morrow at another farm, and returned home not entirely sober to his wife. It was a new and painful source of grief to her to receive him thus, though she tried to invent excuses for the weakness which she could scarcely hide from herself. Farmer Walton wanted no new hands, being scarcely able to keep on those whom he had got already; and Adams turned homeward with a heavy heart, after another idle day. As he walked sadly home, the hint which Lowe had dropped, came often into his mind, and he felt half disposed to question him further upon the matter.— ‘He spoke of getting money honestly,’ said he to himself, ‘besides there can be no harm in hearing what he has got to say; it will be time enough to refuse to have a hand in it when I know better what it is.’ But his conscience told him that there must

be something wrong in it ; and he had just determined to have nothing to say to him, as he reached the door of his cottage. His melancholy looks told his wife that he had been unsuccessful ; and he perceived that something had been vexing her. Their landlord had been to see him—he had heard of his quarrel with his master ; feared for his arrears of rent, and ending by saying, that unless the rent was paid up by that day week, he should find another tenant.

Adams sat for a few minutes with his face buried in his hands ; and then rising, almost without saying a word, he left the cottage in spite of his wife's intreaties. He went straight to Lowe's, he was not at home—he was at the public-house—not choosing to speak with him there, Adams sent a little girl to fetch him home. They were soon in conversation ; and as Lowe perceived at once the state of George's mind, he opened to him his plans without hesitation.

He was a smuggler,—and he wanted assistance in his illicit trade. The very next night he expected a cargo of spirits, if he could get men enough to man his boat and effect the landing of the tubs; and he offered Adams a high price if he would give him his assistance. The bait was tempting; to secure him for the first time, Lowe had offered him a large proportion of the expected profits.

‘But you assured me that it was an honest way of getting money.’

‘And is it not honest? Do not I pay honestly for every drop?’

‘Yes, but the excise, Lowe?’

‘What right has the government to make me pay over again for it, when I have bought it like an honest man? Besides, it is only fair play between us; for if they can catch me, they do; and if they can’t, why then, the more’s the luck.’

Adams had many scruples, but he was sorely tempted to comply. He thought

of his wife and children, scarcely supplied with food and clothing ; he thought of his rent—of the next Friday when he must leave the cottage in which he had lived ever since his marriage—of the little garden where were still growing several flowers planted by the widow's hand—and he began to excuse his inclinations to sin, by thinking how great was his temptation.

Lowe saw that he was wavering, and dropped a hint as if he thought that Adams was afraid to go.

This was too much for him ; false shame was added to his other feelings, and he consented to join in the scheme.

He came back perfectly sober, to the great joy of poor Mary ; she thought that the gloom which hung over him was nothing more than she had of late noticed, and she tried to encourage him with the prospect of getting work again. He was silent and thoughtful ; and poor Mary, with a sigh, remembered how sweetly she had seen her

mother bear affliction, and conscience told her what it was which had been her support. She wiped away the tear which rose in her eyes, lest it should damp still more her husband's spirits.

Little sleep had he that night, and he rose early under pretence of seeking for work, but truly to avoid the presence of his wife, from whom he meant to conceal his plan.

Many times in the day did George resolve to have nothing to do with the business ; but his heart failed him again when he thought of what was before him, otherwise ; and at last he made a sort of compromise with conscience, determining that he would never go again if he this once succeeded.

At last the evening came. Never had Adams spent so long a day—he went home, and telling Mary that he was obliged to go and see a friend who had sent for him, and should not be home till late, he set off to

the appointed rendezvous. When once engaged in the business, the natural courage of George's character made him altogether fearless, and in the perilous business of escaping the coast guard, he showed so much activity, boldness, and resource, that he was overwhelmed with praises by his companions in evil.

The expedition was perfectly successful ; and when at midnight they parted at the house of Lowe, he promptly gave to Adams his promised share. Even as he thrust his ill-acquired wealth into his pocket, George was miserable and dissatisfied with himself. However he turned homeward, and as he reached his cottage perceived a light still burning at the window. Mary was sitting up for him ; her look of eager inquiry as he entered the room, stung him to the quick ; for though she had not said one word to him on his insobriety the other night, he saw how constantly and painfully the recollection of it was present to her mind.

He walked towards that part of the room in which she was sitting, and with an air, almost of violence, threw the money upon the table. Mary turned pale—she was faint at heart, and dreadful surmises filled her mind.

‘Oh George, what are these?’ she almost whispered, in a tone which bespoke her violent agitation. It was long before the whole tale was told. It was one of the deepest affliction to Mary. There had been so much of irritability about her husband lately, that she scarcely dared to tell him what she felt; her looks bespoke it; and even those he seemed at first unable to bear calmly. He was however, quieted by the next morning; he was offered a good place with a neighbouring farmer, the rent was ready, and there was a trifle over to help his sinking credit. As soon as she saw that her husband would bear it, most earnestly did Mary entreat him never again to risk his life in such unlawful enterprises. Po-

verty, anything she assured him was lighter to her, than that he should be exposed to perish in a moment in such a course. Adams was won by her affectionate earnestness ; he was uneasy and discontented with himself, and he resolved most firmly never again to join in a smuggling adventure.

CHAPTER V.

A SMUGGLER'S LIFE.

IT is not often, that such resolutions as those which Adams made, ripen into lasting habits. They are the growth of the natural mind ; they are made in its strength ; and they soon wither away, because they have no deepness of earth in which to strike their roots. And thus it was with his. They endured for a time, while the impression of his first feeling of remorse lasted ; but when this had faded from his mind, and when temptation was again pressing, he fell even more easily than at first into the same courses. A second want of work ; the temptations of the alehouse, which he had never again

totally abandoned ; the solicitations, and the taunts of his late companions, and his own natural love of pleasures which the gains of his ordinary labour did not put within his power, led him, by degrees, to seek to obtain his living by the practice of smuggling. He had nominally become a fisherman, having the half of a small boat, and using it for the purpose of fishing when the weather served.

It was not the work of a day, or even of a year, to fix the character of Adams in this new and ruinous occupation. But by little and little the change was effected. I spoke frequently both to himself and his wife ; but it was in vain. At times, I believe he sincerely resolved to break the fetters which were being wound around him, but they were too strong for him to struggle against in his own strength ; and for one mightier than his, which could have helped him, he never, that I perceived, sought in earnest. There never yet, I

believe, was a confirmed smuggler, whose whole moral character was not ruined by his employments. There is a hardihood and recklessness, a distaste for quiet employments, a love of company and noise, which always marks the man ; and to this is not seldom added the habit of gross intemperance. He who has been admired as the virtual leader of the band, longs for the applause of his companions, when they are talking over past, and planning future adventures ; and the purer pleasures of home soon pall upon the morbidly excited taste. So it was here ; one bad habit followed another ; the breach which was begun by smuggling, was widened by a love of dissolute company, until intemperance, and with it all its sure concomitants followed, wave after wave, until the wreck of the once promising edifice could scarcely be known. Poor Mary suffered keenly and constantly from the alteration in her husband's character and pursuits. As year

after year passed on, grief seemed to eat more and more deeply into her soul. It appeared to be rendering her feelings dull ; there was a sleepiness about them so utterly unlike their early spring. Yet every now and then, when any grosser excess, or more daring risk on the part of her husband, or any other heavy family affliction overtook her, I could plainly see, by the impetuous outbreaking of her feelings, that the current was really hurrying on, beneath the cold misty veil which hung over them. Yet all this time there was no appearance of affliction producing its proper effect ; so far from it, she seemed stupified or hardened by its strokes, and often did I lament over her, as one, the promise of whose early years was for ever fled. It was not only her husband's conduct which pressed heavily upon her. The evil example of their father produced its natural effect upon Mary's children. The eldest boy soon threw off the restraints of the village school, despised

advice, and became the companion of his father's hazards, and his father's sins.

The second seemed for a while more promising. I hoped that this one scion of an evil stock might be trained to bear good fruit: but he too was overcome by temptation, and was following in the course of his elder brother, when a severe fit of sickness seized him, and after a lingering fever, carried him off, leaving us in awful uncertainty as to his eternal condition.

But there was another blow which struck even deeper into the mother's heart, than the loss of this boy; the eldest daughter had long shewn, in her flaunting manners, and showy dress, that the society of her father's friends was fatal to maiden modesty. With what an agony of apprehension did her mother watch over her, and yet how perfectly stunned did she appear at last when the hour of her shame arrived. - Her father's bitter anger against that for which he had unconsciously prepared the way;

her mother's deep sorrow ; her own shame, all pressed together upon the undisciplined mind of the poor girl ; and led her to complete her own destruction by flying from her father's house—never, alas ! to enter it again—nor ever to send to it one comforting message of repentance to say that there was a gleam of hope, before death closed the short career of her sin and misery. Oh, how could the sainted spirit of the aged widow have borne to look now upon this family—whence peace had fled ; and where sin with all its progeny of curses, seemed to have taken up its haunt ? But she did not see it—for however in the consummation of all things, eyes which have been mortal, may be strengthened by the light of God's immediate presence, to glorify him in *all* his ways ; yet suspense is surely spared them while the mystery is yet unaccomplished, and a veil is drawn in mercy over the strugglings and buffetings of those who have not yet like themselves, escaped from the storms of life.

Many such years passed over the head of Mary, but it seemed at last that a crisis had arrived. Her husband and son set out one day as usual upon their unlawful business. It had become so common an occurrence, that her positive apprehensions were greatly diminished. Adams had been always prosperous. Bold and enterprising above others, it seemed as if the elements were in league with him; and his fellows deemed success certain, when he was their director. The cargo which they were attempting to run was more than usually valuable. It was landed, and most of it safely carried off, when Adams, who was left almost alone with what remained, was suddenly seized by the collar, and commanded in the King's name to stand. The night was pitch dark, and small rain had just begun to fall. The few who remained behind perceived however, by the sound of the voice, that they were discovered; and not knowing that Adams was seized, or the

number of their assailants, they slunk off, and made for their several homes.

He himself seemed at the instant dismayed, and indisposed to make any resistance; it was the first time that he had ever been so circumstanced, and his presence of mind was for a moment shaken. It was, however, but for a moment. He perceived that his assailant was alone, and though he knew him to be armed, he determined to make an effort for his liberty. He flung himself upon his captor—he felt the loaded pistol—he grasped it—he turned its point from himself before it could be fired. In the strife it went off, but hurt neither of them. Still the struggle continued; and both of them were grasping at the dagger which was buckled at the waist of the preventive man. Adams was far the stronger of the two, but his antagonist was active, and had the readiest mode of reaching the weapon, which must in a moment end the conflict. At this instant, as they reeled

to and fro in mortal conflict, the ground which the rain had softened, yielded to their feet, and they fell together. Neither would relinquish his grasp, and as they struggled on the ground, they had, without knowing it, reached the very edge of the cliff. A desperate effort from Adams, which shook off the grasp of his enemy, made them first aware of it. But it was, alas ! by the fall of the unhappy man over the precipice.

The first descent was not perfectly perpendicular ; then there came a ledge of bare cliff ; and from below a shelf which bounded that, the precipice set sheer down into the sea at high water, and to the rugged rocks which encircled its base at other times. Over each of these Adams heard him fall ; with a faint shriek or rather yell, as for an instant he seemed to hang upon the first shelf ; then all was silent for a moment ; while Adams held his breath in agony for a space of time which seemed

to him almost infinite, until he heard the heavy plunge of a large falling body into the dark waves which were moaning below. It seemed as if in falling he had disturbed the wild possessors of those cliffs, for just before that splash, he heard the sudden cry as of a startled sea-bird ; then all was hushed again, except the moaning of the sea, or its hoarse grating murmuring, as the retiring surge heaved the pebbles before it, in the little bay where his boat was moored, round the edge of the cliff.

Adams' first feeling after the pause of a moment, when the instinct of self-preservation overcame the agony of his mind, was to rush from the spot before any of the companions of the man should come to his assistance. But he had scarcely gained his feet, when he saw lights gleaming in the mist, already almost upon him. Others too, in his direct path,—and beyond that, some who seemed making straight for the village to cut off the retreat of any stragglers,

deprived him of all hope of escape. In a moment he had determined upon his plan ; he crept slowly and carefully down the edge of the cliff, reached the shelf which we have described, and with the steady tread which experience in such hazards can alone bestow, edged himself some yards along it, and there crouched in a chasm in the very face of the precipice.

Soon he saw the lights gleaming along the edge above him ; he heard voices near him, first hushed as if in fear of alarming any straggler ; then, by degrees louder, as the search became more and more hopeless. At last he perceived, that a consultation was being held upon the cliff above. The pistol of their companion had been found where it had fallen from his hand. Then the marks of their mortal struggle were traced upon the grass, were followed to the edge of the cliff ; and the truth seemed at once comprehended, that one or both had perished there. Some immediately began

to descend to the shore, whilst others remained to indicate the exact spot where they should search. Then he heard the splashing of the men below, as they waded into the water to examine the place. What was passing through the mind of Adams, no pen can possibly relate. The mixture of remorse, of terror, of suspense, almost maddened him; and as he heard his own heart beating with terror, and fancied he could almost hear those of the anxious sailors above him; as he clung to the cliff, over whose face a fellow-creature had just been dashed by him into eternity, as he crouched upon that ledge from which that horrible death-yell, which even now rung in his terrified remembrance, had but a few minutes before sounded, and as his eyes strained into the dark mist below him, and presented ever the features of the murdered sailor, who had been sent by him at such a moment into the presence of his Judge; all these thoughts so overwhelmed

him, that several times he was upon the very point of giving himself up into the hands of the sailors near him. The instinct of self-preservation still upheld him.

In this state he was when a shout from below announced that one body was found, where the waves were idly washing up and down that, which a few minutes before, had been so full of life, and so animated by passion. Another call told whose it was ; and all watch on the cliff being now considered hopeless, the party above began to descend to aid the search of those below. Yet, still Adams dared not attempt his escape. He feared that he might fall in with some others of the band, who were watching near the village. He heard the sailors below retreat along the shore, which the tide was leaving dry ; and as the sound of their footsteps, heavy with the load they bore along the shingle beach died upon his ear, he found the perfect solitude of his awful situation more intolerable than the neighbourhood of

man, even though it were that of those who sought his life. Ages seemed to pass over him. For he waited till the first grey dawn of the morning was beginning to break, before he cautiously left his hiding place; and almost frantic with conflicting emotions, flew to his cottage. His first act was to see whether his lad was returned; he was still absent, and though there would in ordinary circumstances, have been no peculiar reason for alarm in this, as he often spent the night with one of his companions when they were late home; yet, in the present state of Adam's feelings, it filled his agitated mind with the most heart-rending anticipations. He was, however, too fully occupied for the present, in removing from his clothes all mark of the struggle in which he had been engaged, to be able to give himself up fully to these thoughts. When this task was done, he stepped softly into his wife's room. She was asleep, and close to her, as she always was in his absence, was her surviving

daughter—she, whose dulled perceptions had rendered her happily, an unapt scholar, for the lessons of evil which were passing around her; and whose whole powers, both of mind and soul, seemed absorbed in a deep, and still almost infantine fondness for her mother, who loved her with as intense an affection in return. As he looked upon them, his wife started as in some dream of terror, while the quiet countenance of the daughter spoke of that calm to which her mother had been so long a stranger. Adams could bear it no longer, he muttered to himself, ‘A murderer shall not disturb *them*. A murderer—Ha! that is a new name for me. Yes, a murderer! a murderer!’ he repeated to himself, as he threw himself into the bed of his boy, having torn off his clothes. He lay long awake, groaning almost in an agony; and then straining his eyes, as if to see the features of the victim of his sin. At last, his mind and body alike wearied out, he sunk into

a feverish sleep, out of which from time to time he was startled by the fearful impression made even upon his dreams by what had passed that night. Again was he struggling for life—again he heard the blow upon the ledge of the rock—again the yell of agony—again he seemed to pause in breathless expectation, and again woke up, as he fancied he heard the body dash into the dark and troubled water.

The morning found him in a high fever ; the effect of over wrought excitement of mind the night before. It was a sad waking for his wife ; as she watched by his bed looking at his glazed eye, and supplying continually the calls of his parching thirst. She was thus engaged when a neighbour called in, whose manner at once spoke her as the messenger of ill news. Evil tidings are soon spread ; and Mary was by this time almost the only woman in the village who did not know that there had been a battle the night before between some smugglers

and the coast guard; that one of the last had been thrown from the cliff and killed, and that her son had been taken upon suspicion of being concerned in the affair, as he had been found, soon after it happened, near the village at a very late hour of night. Mary almost fainted as the whole message of ill was made known to her. She hardly dared tell her husband, what had happened, in his present state; and yet what to do towards procuring the liberation of their boy, without first consulting him, she could not possibly imagine. Her doubts however upon this point were soon resolved. Adams, who had heard the conversation, called her to him, and soon learned every thing from her. She naturally attributed the almost phrenzied feelings which seemed to disturb her husband, to anxiety about her son, and the weakening effects of illness. She little guessed what other thoughts were added to these in his meditations, or how bitterly she increased his

misery by what she intended should comfort him.

‘They can never seriously suspect him of being the murderer. Why I would be the first to give him up if he were.’

Her husband shuddered.

‘Do not be so cast down, George; you know the lad is light and thoughtless: but for the crime of blood!—I could never look at him again if there were a chance of his being so utterly degraded.’

By a strong effort Adams repressed his feelings enough to say that they must think of the best mode of clearing the lad from the charge. It was determined that Mary should set off at once and endeavour to see him; should tell him of his father's illness, and suggest that this might furnish a plausible excuse for his being so late out the night before.

Mary was unused to deceit, and she felt deeply the sin and misery of being thus made partaker of the guilt of her husband's

evil life, through the force of her motherly affection. She stifled however the voice of conscience, by saying to herself, that she was only delivering his father's message. It was with the greatest difficulty that she obtained permission to see her son ; he was to be detained until the verdict of the coroner's inquest upon the body of the murdered sailor was made known. Those were anxious hours for Mary. She dared not leave her husband so long as would be necessary to stay for the sentence of the jury ; she therefore begged of some of her neighbours to come from time to time with intelligence of their doings. She found Adams much worse at her return. She thought him at times delirious ; he seemed lost in thought, and muttered to himself, ' Murderer'—' murdered my son too.' Mary attributed it all to his deep anxiety for their only surviving boy ; the very idea of her husband's guilt never for one instant crossed her mind. With what eagerness did she

come down stairs, as her innocent Hannah summoned her to receive the succeeding reports of the neighbours. 'Farmer Stubbs, I'm sorry to say, neighbour, says he fears it will go hard with the boy; but it wont be settled he thinks for these two hours yet.'

For a few minutes Mary struggled in vain with her emotions; a mother's heart was bursting within her. 'It was my mother's prophecy:' 'Many afflictions,' she said, 'and many they have been;' and then she sat for a moment almost stupified by grief.

Hannah, who seemed perfectly at a loss to conceive what could be the meaning of the exciting scene around her, but whose affectionate heart was rung with the sight of her mother's grief, came and sat by her, and with a countenance expressive of affection mixed with alarm, began in her own way to endeavour to enquire into and alleviate her sorrows. As the mother looked upon her daughter, the soothing

effects of her sympathy stole over her, and she burst for the first time, into a flood of tears. At this moment she was called by Adams : he was again himself, and eagerly enquiring after his boy. She told him only that the verdict would not be given for an hour.

‘ Mary, I think my head wanders sometimes. Have I said any thing which has distressed you?’ said he, in a tone of forced calmness.

‘ Oh no! you only seemed thinking about Ned,’ she answered, fearing to increase his own agitation, by mentioning to him his exclamations : and thinking that he had been accusing himself of leading his son into the habits which had now exposed his life to danger.

It was not long before other messengers arrived. ‘The coroner has been questioning him very closely, and he has told his story very plainly, that he was going to Tom Boxall’s for something for his father, who

was ill.'—So then he asked him why he did not tell the men so last night, when they took him on suspicion.—I was afraid he had nothing to say, but in a moment he looked up and said, ' Because I thought they would go with me to my father's house, to see if it was true, and I did not wish him to be disturbed by them, so ill as he was.' ' But would he not be more disturbed by your not coming back.'—' No: because, if I could not get what he wanted, I was to stay with Boxall till morning.'

Mary's hopes of speedily seeing her son at liberty, were much increased ; but her heart sickened when she heard how ready he seemed to be with what she knew were all false excuses ; and she thought of the early horror of a lie which her mother had instilled into her. She had not however long to muse ; her husband would be anxious to hear the news, and this time she was anxious to impart it. She was still sitting by the bed-side, when her son appeared.

He was discharged, as there was no sort of evidence against him ; a verdict of ' Wilful murder against some persons unknown,' had been returned, and a large reward was talked of as likely to be offered, to lead to the discovery of the offender.

Mary was much dissatisfied at the little effect which her son's discharge seemed to produce upon her husband. His increasing illness however, afforded a sufficient solution for it. His fits of delirium increased, and she wanted to send for the parish doctor ; he was, however, whenever a lucid interval returned, so violent in his refusal to see him, that she did not dare to call him in. Towards night, she sent for me ; I found him in a very high fever, and needing immediate medical advice. I waited till his reason returned : he seemed dreadfully alarmed at seeing me near him, and began directly to say, that he hoped he had said nothing improper, while his head was wandering.

He still refused to see the doctor, but consented that I should report his situation, and be the medium of communication. The fever was violent and dangerous. I was continually with him, and soon suspected the whole truth from expressions which dropped from him in his delirium.

One day as I sat by his bed side, he started horribly, and then casting his eyes to one side of the room, seemed to shrink back suddenly from it; he muttered quickly between his almost closed teeth, 'That is *his* yell—I know its sound—is he there? How wet he is—No, you can't prove it—nobody saw me—the birds can't speak—there—there—there is no mark now—hark! who was that?'—He fell back again upon the pillow almost fainting, while the big drops stood thickly over his wasted forehead. Even poor Mary, I thought, began to suspect something from the eagerness with which he asked what he had said, when delirious, and the pains he took to account

for his mind being so full of the dreadful end of the preventive man. 'My mind runs so upon it, sir, that I may speak queerly about it when my senses are wandering.'

It was in vain that I tried to soothe and quiet his perturbed spirit. It was evident that some heavy load pressed upon his mind ; that he could not bring himself to confession, and yet could know no peace without it. Many were the sorrowful visits that I paid him, many the prayers which I offered up for him, and with him. Over and over again did I point him "to that blood which cleanseth from all iniquity;" I strove to heal the wounded conscience, by telling him that there was forgiveness for *him*, whatever was his sin, if he did but truly turn to the Lord Jesus for pardon. At last the crisis of his complaint was passed, and he began slowly to rally. When he was out of all immediate danger, and I no longer feared any evil effects from the attempt, I resolved to probe the wound

more deeply than I had yet done, hoping by this means to lead him to confession ; and then, through God's grace, to penitence of heart. By little and little, I showed him how much I knew, and how much more I suspected ; at first it seemed only to terrify him, with the fear of conviction ; he was, however at last reassured by my telling him that I thought it was not my duty, as watching over his spiritual interest, to impart to any one the confession which he might make to me of past misdeeds, whatever might have been their enormity : that I was there as the messenger of God ; not to bring him before an earthly bar of justice ; but to lead him to humble himself truly before his God, for his great sins against him.

The struggle was hard before he could bring himself to confess the whole : but at last the sacrifice was made. He appeared to be truly penitent, and vowed most earnestly (if he were yet spared) the entire abandon-

ment of his evil mode of life. His health was in time pretty well restored, but the impression made on his mind evidently lasted. I saw him repeatedly, and trusted that the ground-work of a real change of character was laid.

Early on the morning of the day after he had first returned to his fishing, he came to me in a state of alarming agitation.

‘What has happened?’ was my immediate question—I will put down, as nearly as possible in his own words, the account of his feelings, which he gave me in the course of our conversation.

‘You know, sir, what a horror I felt at going down to *that* shore again; how long I put it off, until I was afraid it might raise suspicions against me, if I did not go back to my old business, in the fishing way; when I got there you may be sure that no other thoughts were in my mind, but of that dreadful night. How could it be otherwise? For there was the rock, and

the shelf, and the steep cliff; and oh! it makes my heart ache, to think of it; the very moaning of the waves seemed to speak to me, and reproach me. Well, sir, I went home at night, still plodding over these things; and they were the last thoughts in my mind, when I fell asleep; and then was the worst of all. I thought that I was walking under that cliff, and saw a cave there which I had never noticed before; I turned into it, to see what sort of place it was; I walked on, and on, till I seemed to pass under a porch, and the cave, which had been dark before, seemed lighted with a heavy red light, like the glare of a dull fire. Just as I was about to turn and try to find my way out, I saw a man walking up to me: I could not help stopping, though I did not know why I did. He came close up to me, and then I saw that it was *him*, and he was dressed just as he was that night—I trembled all over, and not a word could I utter; I thought he looked me

full in the face with a horrid sort of laugh ; and said—‘ So you are come here too.’— I was ready to drop, but I said, ‘ *Here !* where am I then?’—‘ In Hell,’ he answered —‘ In Hell!’ I thought I said, ‘ why, there are no flames here : this cannot be Hell?’—‘ Are there no flames?’ said he. And with that, it seemed as if my eyes were suddenly opened, and what had appeared to me before to be nothing but a dull red light, now grew into a thousand separate and distinct forms of fire, playing and curling, and winding round, and through the miserable man to whom I was speaking. A confused sound too, as of millions of beings groaning in suppressed agony, then broke on my ear, from the further end of the cavern, as the flames seemed in that quarter to burst forth into greater distinctness ; I thought that I had just strength enough to turn from the horrible sight, when he seized my left arm, and said, just in that voice which has rung so often in my ears,—‘ And in six

months I shall have you here.' I woke up with that, and found the arm which he had seized all numbed with pain.

This was the substance of his account; and whilst I tried to turn even this to a good effect, in deepening his feelings of repentance, and quickening his desire of true pardon, I told him, of course, that such a dream proved nothing, but that his mind was full of this one subject, and that the thoughts which had been harassing him whilst awake, returned again even in the hours of sleep.

It was many days before the impression of his dream at all wore off, and before he could again bring himself to resume his business on the coast. The state of the weather giving him an unexpected reason for intermitting his attempts at fishing. He appeared certainly improved by his sufferings; he was much more attentive to the duties of religion, was constant at church, abjured the alehouse, and steadily refused

to join in his former contraband adventures ; but still there was something about him, which, even when I tried most earnestly to hope concerning him, whispered fear instead.

Remorse and shame, were constant inmates in his mind, but I could not trace the workings of that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of." He did not seem softened by his misery ; above all, he did not lay hold of the hope set before sinners in the Saviour's cross, with that confiding eager hold which marks the penitent, whose heart has been truly touched by the Spirit of the Lord.

CHAPTER VI.

A SMUGGLER'S DEATH.

IT would be a painful task to record all the melancholy steps, which led to the fulfilment of my fears concerning Adams. It was long, and after many relapses and returns, before the salutary impression of his sufferings went quite away. I had warned and entreated him, as long as he would bear my visits; but latterly he had always escaped them if possible; and on one or two occasions, when he could not do this, had repulsed them even with rudeness. All therefore that I could do now, was to pray for the unhappy man. One good effect, however, of his illness still re-

mained ; neither he nor his son had ever returned to the life of smugglers. But even this one last step was at last taken. They consented to join a party engaged in an extensive attempt of this unlawful nature.

Mary had no idea of their intention, and when the evening closed in and they did not return, she sighed bitterly, thinking that they were gone from their boats, as had been too frequently the case of late, to the destructive alehouse. The hours passed on ; it was late, and she and Hannah went to bed, leaving the key of the cottage, as usual, where her husband could reach it.

Mary could not sleep ; she knew not why, but her thoughts were running upon the scenes of her childhood. Words and things which had been long forgotten, were wakening upon her recollection. Her memory seemed, as it often does, to open fitfully, stores which had been sealed up for years in forgetfulness.

Above all, she continually reverted to

words which had from time to time dropped from her sainted mother—upon her prediction of sorrow to her beloved daughter, upon her earnest entreaty to her to strive, if it did come, to let it lead her to him who alone can comfort the aching heart. She had at last fallen into a sort of doze, in which she was carrying on the thoughts which had last occupied her mind.

From this she was suddenly roused, by a loud clap of thunder. She thought with trembling anxiety, of her husband and son; It must be very late: why are they not returned? She rose quietly from her bed, where her beloved Hannah slept undisturbed by the storm, and going to the window, gently opened the lattice. It had been a most sultry day, and the air was still heated, but a violent storm was evidently rising. Every now and then a tremendous peal of thunder echoed along the sky; and when a black cloud which loured over the sea, poured forth from time

to time a flash of lightning, she could see tier after tier of clouds heaped one upon another, and torn, apparently, by some violent elemental war; as their heavy masses hurried round and round, and from time to time poured out volumes of flame. The sea too, she heard, was rising; as the heavy ground-swell, lashing the whole coast, seemed, in the still pauses which yet held the heavens silent, to vie with the pealing thunder, which continually broke in upon its roar. As she listened and watched the coming storm, she heard, as she thought, a signal gun from the coast. She strained her ears to catch the sound; yes, it was another, she was sure of it, in that pause of the thunder. In a moment the most horrible apprehensions filled her mind. Had her husband been inveigled into joining again with the smugglers? was he taken? perhaps killed in an affray with the guard; was he on that roaring element? and were those guns designed by some who had observed their

danger, to call others together, to render to them what must be unavailing aid? She could not bear the horrible uncertainty: so closing the lattice gently, she hastily dressed herself, meaning to hurry down to the beach, and satisfy her anxious fears. Before she went, she once more bent over her daughter: she was sleeping perfectly undisturbed. This confusion of the elements, like many a moral storm before, seemed passing altogether unnoticed over her placid composure.

Mary hurried down to the station. The sea was running mountains high, near the shore: it was that tremendous ground-swell which rises on this coast, sometimes within a few minutes, and exceeds in violence, the fiercest storms; seeming as if it would tear up before it, the very foundations of the cliff. There was no one at the station. But along the shore, on a low ledge of the rock, just out of the reach of the breakers, at the mouth of a cave, below the high

chalk precipice, she thought she saw lights gleaming. It was just where the preventive man had been thrown down some years before; and, under other circumstances, Mary would have dreaded, at such an hour, to approach the spot. But for what will not the love of a mother and a wife nerve the heart of a woman? She hurried towards the lights; and as she drew near, she could distinguish the figures of men moving slowly, as if intent upon their employment. As she drew still nearer, she saw two other figures, apparently laid down at the mouth of the cave. She moved on, almost frantic with anxiety. She was amongst them in a few moments more, and then she saw not the storm—she heard not the waves,—she had fallen in a swoon upon the lifeless body of her husband.

In pushing to land, upon the first appearance of the storm, the smugglers' boat had been swamped, and all on board had perished; two only of the bodies had been

recovered, that of Adams and another man. Young Adams and six others were altogether missing.

Mary was carried immediately to the station-house, perfectly insensible ; her swoons followed each other with such frightful rapidity, that fears were entertained for her life ; at length however she became more tranquil.

In the grey of the morning I was already with her, and endeavoured to prevail upon her to return to her own cottage. She insisted upon once more seeing her husband's body. Having in vain resisted her desires, I accompanied her into the room where it was laid. I was more alarmed by her composure now, than by her agony before. She looked steadfastly on the face of the dead for a minute or two, and then, drawing in her breath between her teeth, muttered in a hard and sullen tone, ' My mother's *curse!*' Then, without saying another word, or dropping a tear, she accompanied me out of the room.

She assented to my desire that she should go immediately to her cottage. She walked silently by my side, neither responding to the few words of comfort which I endeavoured to suggest to her, nor uttering any passionate expressions of grief. 'What!' said I to myself, 'cannot even this melt her? Then her heart is hardened indeed!' I walked mournfully to the cottage. The cheerful aspect of reviving nature jarred upon my depressed spirits.

The storm had spent its fury, falling in a deluge of rain, the drops of which hung from every spray and leaf, and from every stalk of the long grass, and shone gaily like a thousand brilliants in the bright rays of the sun, which was just arisen above the horizon. I breathed a secret prayer to the Most High as I walked along; entreating him to dispel, in like manner, the darkness which had so long hung over the soul of Mary; and even after this last fearful storm of agony to let the Sun of Righteousness arise upon her, with healing in his wings.

CHAPTER VII.

A MOTHER'S SORROWS.

WHEN we reached the cottage, we found a new source of distress. The violence of the storm had at last awakened Hannah. She had sought instantly for her mother, and not finding her, had been overcome with alarm at so unusual an event. The first notion of the terrified girl was to go and seek her in a little wood near the cottage, which formed their accustomed walk, but having none to take care of her, and being, through the disturbance of her mind, far more incapable than usual, of providing for herself, she had gone out with no more protection than that of her ordinary cottage

dress She had not got far from home, when the storm overtook her in its fullest violence, and this adding to her confusion, she lost her way, and had remained till morning, exposed to the warfare of the elements, and overpowered too with terror and distress. She had been found in this state by a neighbour going to his work at break of day, who had just brought her in as we entered the cottage. The sullen and frozen silence which Mary had hitherto maintained, made me tremble for her reason, but her conduct now completely dispelled this alarm. The poor terrified girl flew at once to her mother, and clung to her in a sort of childish agony. Mary soothed, fondled, and soon succeeded in calming her ; she took her to her room, and putting her to bed, prepared herself to join her innocent child, with the hope of perfectly calming her mind, and restoring warmth to her exhausted body.

It was not many hours before I again visited Mary. I found her in precisely the

same state ; calm, composed, with every feeling shut up, as if she was hardened into stone, by the visitations of her Father's hand. Nothing roused her from this state, not even the recovery of her son's body,—nor the committing it and her dead husband to one common grave. To her neighbours she scarcely ever spoke, and though always civil and attentive to myself, yet it was that cold attention, which came as near as possible to repelling all the intercourse into which I endeavoured to lead her. To Hannnah only, her heart seemed to open. Every affection of her soul was now centered upon her ; she was her only object ; for her she lived. If she woke, or rose, or eat, or slept, it was to lead Hannah to do the same. There appeared to be some secret and undefineable sympathy between them ; for though, to every one else, Hannah's dullness approached almost to idiotcy, yet with her mother, she appeared even quick in perception, and overflowing

with enjoyment. Her mind had perfectly recovered its ordinary calm ; but the effects of that awful night might be traced in her bodily health. It had not escaped the watchful care of her mother, that Hannah had from that time never ceased to cough : and other eyes could trace a paleness in Hannah's cheek, and a hollowness in her eye, to which they had heretofore been strangers.

These symptoms of decay her mother had not seen ; she hung over her tender flower with such an incessant gaze, that she marked not the gradual change which was passing upon it. It was not however very long before more threatening symptoms made their appearance, and forced themselves upon her mother's notice.

Hannah had always been a delicate child, and the infirmity of her mind had secluded her from the exposure to sun and air, common with those in her station of life. There was therefore a delicacy in her com-

plexion which is very unusual in a peasant's child. This made the ashy paleness which now overspread her features the more observable, and threw also into stronger contrast with it, the deep flush which mantled over them every evening. Her sleep too, which had always been as quiet and serene as that of an infant, began to be disturbed. It seemed as if the decay of her body was acting, in an extraordinary manner, upon her mind; it was beginning to obtain that clearness to which it had been so long a stranger, but with which it was so soon to be perfectly endued in the full light of its Creator's presence. Others, indeed, did not notice this, because her constitutional shyness and timidity seemed rather to increase. It was, perhaps, the first opening to the light, of the eye long-accustomed to darkness, which gave every object around her so much power to injure its exquisite sensibility. Still her mother could not but trace in her a clearer exercise of reason

than any she had before observed. With this conviction, there came to the mind of Mary a new source of anxiety; she could not hide from herself that she was not likely to see her daughter's feeble strength struggle long with the fatal attacks of consumption. The leaflets of her beloved plant had begun to droop, a slight shade had already passed upon its bright and beautiful flower, and she knew not how speedily the principle of vitality might be overpowered. The flame of life fluttered, she saw, with a fitful existence, and a single breath might extinguish its lambent light, 'And what,' said she, 'shall be her condition afterwards?'

She was lost in these anxious thoughts one night, when sitting by the bed of her child, who had at last, after much restlessness, sunk into a quiet sleep, while the heavy drops, which attested the deadly struggle which was going on within, stood thickly upon her pale and almost transparent forehead,

Mary sunk upon her knees, and for the first time for years, poured forth an earnest supplication to the God of Mercy. 'Grant, O Lord, that this my beloved child, may be made fit for thy holy presence. May she be indeed washed in his blood, who died for her. May her faith in him be true, according to the powers which thou hast given her. May she join that saint of thine who is gone before: and Oh! may her mother not be wanting at that hour. Though she has wandered from thee so long, yet in mercy, Lord, restore her, and help her to lead her child in the right way.'

It was her first earnest prayer, for though she had never given up the form of daily supplication, yet she had long been a stranger to its reality. A thick cloud had been drawn between her and heaven; her hardened conscience, and her sins brooded over with remorse, instead of being viewed with humility and contrition, made her heaven over her brass, and the earth that was under

her, iron. Communion with God was impossible; and every stroke which he had given in love, every affliction which had been sent to turn her, as they had failed of their intended purpose, had made her heart harder. But now the rock was smitten. The flow of holy affections rushed forth. That night was one much to be remembered by Mary. The first burst of prayer had been like the few large drops before the shower. The angels had rejoiced over the returning sinner; she soon poured out her whole heart before her father in the deepest penitence and most earnest supplication.

A message from Mary brought me to her cottage in the morning; she could scarcely speak to me without tears; I soon discovered and blessed God sincerely for the change which had taken place in her; it was like the bursting forth of suppressed existence after an arctic winter: it seemed almost too sudden to be true; the fresh and green verdure had so instantly followed

upon the bleakest desolation. Yet true and real it was, for the Spirit of the Lord had breathed over the waste places of her soul, and the wilderness had begun to blossom as the garden of the Lord. She was most deeply humbled; 'Oh!' she would say, 'how many years has my God borne with me! he has sought fruit, not for three, but for thirty years, and still has he found me a cumberer of the ground; and even yet will he receive me; even yet are the tender mercies of my Saviour sufficient for me; even yet can his blood cleanse me. How wonderful have been his dealings with me; every correction seemed wasted upon me, many as they have been; but now, blessed be his name, I have not been afflicted in vain; for by this last stroke have I been turned to him. It was a most instructive lesson to watch all the early promise of Mary's character even now fulfilled. It was before like some glorious prospect which was marred and clouded by a close and universal

mist; but now the cloud was melting away, and every feature of the landscape arraying itself in its true beauty and proportion. Her great anxiety was for the soul of her daughter. It was quite evident that she would not long be an inhabitant of this world. Her insidious complaint had made dreadful ravages in the frail tabernacle of the body; but still it seemed proportionably to clear and increase the powers of the immortal spirit. Nor was it a mere intellectual improvement. Mary's prayers and labours for her child, seemed indeed to be abundantly answered. She had taught her, when young, to accompany her night and morning in a short form of prayer, and increasing years had not led to the abandonment of the custom. Hannah had still been used, with infantine simplicity and with scarcely more than infantine comprehension, to bow her knees together with her mother and repeat with her the words of supplication. But now she laboured hard to lead

her on beyond the mere form. She would speak to her often of heaven, and of the name of Jesus; and the innocent mind of her daughter seemed readily to receive her teaching. Scriptural converse was the key that unlocked the secret treasures of her soul. It was like the power of music over an irrational creature; as its harmony was breathed over her soul, it seemed to us as if it reached her by some more immediate channel than her darkened understanding; it was as if it had some secret affinity with something within her; but soon it purified her powers of comprehension. Though she knew little else, she had now learned to know the love of her Redeemer; and with what evident earnestness did she unite in the prayers which we offered up, day after day, to the throne of grace. I could hardly help fancying oftentimes that the blessed angels came and communed with her, who had known so little of earthly converse—she seemed to learn so much more than we

could teach her. Her decline was very gradual, and her end was peace. The arms of her mother were round her when Hannah breathed her last; and the delighted spirit which had long been imprisoned in the flesh, and which had been so bound and pent in that it had known the weight of more than the ordinary burden of that depressing union, was set free from the alliance of earthly infirmity, and, with new powers and dilated energies, rejoiced in the presence of her God.

Bitter was the pang to Mary when she resigned her last earthly treasure; but she had now learned not to "sorrow as one without hope:"—tears, indeed, dropped fast from her eyes as she turned away from the grave, a lonely sojourner upon the face of this populous earth. But she had learned to bless the hand which had afflicted her. Often did she testify that indeed of very faithfulness her Lord had caused her to be troubled. There was not, she would say,

—there was not one stroke too much,—for but for that last, all the rest would have been wasted on me.

Her few remaining years saw her ripen rapidly for that crown of glory which now she doubtless wears. Her spirit was deeply chastened by affliction;—it was a school in which she had been long a learner; and fully could she sympathize with every labouring heart. Her state of mind was like a second spring, so sweetly did every Christian grace blossom and bear fruit:—and as she drew nearer to the grave, joy itself was not wanting to her: it seemed as if the refreshing gales of heavenly consolation were vouchsafed to animate and purify her soul, even before she had anchored on the everlasting shore. Like the fainting seaman who tastes upon the perfumed breeze the neighbourhood of the spicy shores, and is animated to renewed labours, she was hereby strengthened to hold on her course with joy, waiting with composed expect-

tation for the glad time of her departure hence. It came at last,—it found her watching,—it crowned her labours with everlasting joy; it fulfilled the brightest promise of her early years; and, though preceded by a long, and painful, and weary journey, it finally answered all her sainted mother's prayers, in the everlasting rest to which it conducted her.

THE FUNERAL.

Farewell, dear flow'rs ! sweetly your time ye spent,
Fit, while ye liv'd, for smell or ornament ;
 And, after death, for cure.
I follow straight without complaint or grief ;
Since, if my scent be good, I care not if
 It be as short as yours.

GEORGE HERBERT.

THE FUNERAL.

I HAD scarcely returned from visiting some sick people, when I was told that the overseer wanted to speak with me. 'Let him come in.'

Mr. Johnson soon acquainted me with his business: 'As John Snow was walking along the shore this afternoon, near the black rocks, he saw something floating in the water, which he found to be the body of a man. With the help of some others, he removed it from the water, and it is now laid in the fisherman's hut. We have sent over to the Coroner, and the inquest is to be held to-morrow evening.'

By six o'clock the next evening I was at

the fisherman's hut: the Coroner was there, and the jury were just going to view the body. I did not go in with them, for there is something repugnant to my feelings, unless duty requires it, in thus examining in the presence of others, the tabernacle which the immortal spirit has forsaken. There is a sacredness about such remains, which breathes an awful stillness over the soul; and the observations of others, even when they are not trifling in themselves, seem discordantly to jar upon the mind at such a season. When the jury had finished their examination of the body, and were gone into the next room to determine upon their verdict, I went alone into the chamber of the dead. It was of the meanest order, the cottage was in its best state but miserable; and this was its worst part. The floor was unevenly paved with rough stones; the ceiling was low, and deeply coloured with the efforts of the smoke of an occasional fire to curl

its reluctant way up a miserable chimney : a torn net, a small keg or two, and a few wicker fish-baskets, with a broken chair, discarded from the better parts of the cottage, formed its whole furniture. A doubtful light struggled through the clouded and patched window, and streamed with a melancholy ray full upon the board upon which lay the body of the drowned man. As I approached it, a shudder came across me: oh! it is fearful work that death makes with the human body. I had seen death before, in the countenance of many. I had seen it in the face of the young and the beautiful, who had fallen sweetly asleep in Jesus. I had seen it where middle age and maturity had been worn down by sickness, and where it seemed as if a quiet slumber had lulled for a while the sense of pain into forgetfulness. I had seen it, too, when strong disease had suddenly laid low a frame of iron, and when the struggles had been hard, so that every feature bore

testimony to the fearful conflict, when the glazed eye would hardly remain closed, and the teeth were set firmly together as in the last convulsive agony. But I had never seen any instance in which death and decay had so marred the human countenance. The body had evidently lain long in the water. It had sunk for a while to those silent depths which the storm that hurries over the surface of the wave scarcely disturbs. The face had rested upon the gravelly bottom, and here and there were the deep and purple impressions of the surface of the stones. There was still upon the features the look of the last struggle, that agony of impression which is printed upon the countenance by a sudden and violent death.

As I looked at the dead man, imagination became busy in filling up the detail of that sorrowful picture, on the outlines of which my eye rested. The feeling of the man himself as he vainly struggled for life, cut

off in a moment in the full height of youth and strength; the first turbulent alarm, the awful despairing realization of his fears, the glance of his agitated mind, backward through life, and forward into Eternity; the probable agony of the friends from whom he was thus snatched; a widowed mother perhaps, or a helpless wife, beings to whom he was everything; above all, anxious uncertain thoughts concerning the state of that immortal soul which had been thus hurried into the presence of its Judge; all these things were passing rapidly through my mind, when I was called away from my musings, to receive the Coroner's report. 'A man unknown found drowned;' with a warrant for his interment in a place of christian burial, was the Coroner's return.

The next afternoon was fixed for the time; the preparations for the funeral were committed to the overseer; and as it was thought that a clue to the name and abode of the deceased had been discovered, a

message was dispatched to his supposed friends to let them know where the body had been found. At seven o'clock on the evening of the next day, a cart bearing the coffin of the unhappy man, appeared at the entrance of the church-yard. It was of the plainest construction, and there was on it no memorial of the name or age of him whose body it contained. It was followed by two persons, the overseer of the parish, and another man decently dressed, whose face was buried in a handkerchief: he appeared to be of rather advanced years, and of what had been a strong and manly frame. The deep heavings of his side, together with an occasional half-stifled sob, seem to bespeak the agony of deep affliction with which he was wrestling. 'He is the father of the poor young man,' was the overseer's answer to a whispered question; 'he has identified him by his watch and linen.' I endeavoured to speak a word of encouragement to him, but the speechless agony

of his grief shewed that any interruption to the first full flow of sorrow, would but chafe and aggravate its course. We moved towards the place prepared for his interment; it was dug in a remote quarter of the church-yard, where a few graves appeared, unmarked by any stone; the spot where, in a parish near an inhospitable coast, several bodies had been, from time to time, interred, whose sole earthly memorial was the mournful entry in the register, 'Man unknown, found drowned.'

It was a painful and awful scene. The shadows of evening were closing round us; the wind was rising in fitful and stormy violence,—a few drops of rain fell from time to time as the different clouds hurried over us; and the roar of the increasing waves at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, came upon the rising and falling breeze as they dashed against the rocky shore. Our scanty band, strangers all but one, to the hopes, and fears, and memory

of the deceased,—and that one struggling with an unexpected and over-mastering sorrow, stood for a moment and leant over the open grave ; then the solemn words of the funeral service blended with the scene—those words of Christian hope and charity, which leave to the heart-searching God the right of judging of the secrets of the soul, and receive again into the keeping of the church that departed member whom she had sent forth from the font of Christian baptism, sprinkled with holy dew, and signed with the cross of her Redeemer. She receives him again into her charge, hoping earnestly that when his Master and her own shall come to judgment, he may be found to have “ led the rest of his life according to that beginning.”

The service closed—and as I turned from the grave I beckoned to the weeping father to speak with me.

‘ What was your son’s age ? ’

‘ He was just thirty, Sir ! he was my only child.’

‘ Had you seen much of him of late ?’

‘ Yes, Sir ; I have seen him often.’

‘ Have you known the state of his mind ? Did it give you reason to hope that he was prepared for such an end ?’

A heavy sigh was at first my only answer ; and I was grieved to have asked a question to which he could not reply without pain. ‘ Sir,’ he said in a moment, in a deep and almost whispered voice, ‘ Sir, he was my child. Oh, Sir ! I never knew what sorrow was before. I have left his mother heart-broken at home, and I am hurrying back to her :’ and then, as though exhausted by the effort, his voice sunk into a sob in which his very soul seemed breathed out.

A few, a very few words I addressed to him, in parting from him. In these I endeavoured to fix upon his mind the impression of seriousness which the scene and the service could hardly fail of having made upon him : I tried too to turn inward his hovering and excited feelings ; to lead him more ear-

nestly than ever to seek for himself a personal interest in that Saviour who is to all who believe in him "the resurrection and the life."

It was, I think, five years afterwards that I was passing through the village of H——. It was the place where the parents of poor William Brown had lived. As I walked through the village doubtful where to begin my inquiries, I saw an elderly woman at the door of one of the neatest cottages: its latticed window was almost hidden beneath the roses and honeysuckle which grew in emulous luxuriance over it. The little plot of garden-ground before it was studded with every common flower of beauty and sweetness. There was something in the countenance of the woman which excited my immediate interest; she was plainly, almost coarsely dressed, but every thing was perfectly clean and tidy in her appearance, and her face, which seemed as if it had been handsome in youth, wore, I thought, the impress of

sorrow, and yet of content; her dress bespoke her to be a widow, and her whole appearance assured me at the first glance that she was one that was 'a widow indeed and desolate.' I got into conversation with her, and soon opened my inquiries.

'Do you know any thing of the family of a young man named Brown, who was lost off the coast of —— about five years ago?'

'Indeed I do, Sir;' she said with a sigh.

'Was he a relation of yours?'

'No, Sir; he was not, though perhaps he might have been—poor William.'

She ceased speaking, as if painful recollections had been awakened in her mind by the mention of his name. I perceived her difficulty, and turned the conversation to other matters. We went into the cottage together, and as I saw her wipe away a tear which had burst from her eye, I spoke to her of the sorrow which had evidently been her lot. I spoke to her of that gracious Father who chasteneth those in whom

he delighteth. Her's was no unmeaning assent to truths repeated to the callous and reluctant ear ; they spoke evidently to her heart ; for raising her head she said :—‘ Oh, Sir ; indeed I can bless God for my sufferings : it has been good for me that I have been afflicted, for it has, I hope, brought me to love and serve my heavenly Father.’

It seemed as if she no longer felt towards me as a stranger, for of her own accord she began :—

‘ You asked me about William Brown, Sir ; it is a sad story—but God has been gracious in all that has come upon me. I can speak of it, Sir, to you, for you will feel with me in it. That little cottage which you see over the way was where his parents always lived : they had some little money of their own which they had saved in early life, and with that they kept a cow, and with a little work done once or twice a-week by Brown, and a little washing and mending by his wife, they lived very

comfortably. They were decent, quiet people, and every body respected them : they had but one child, William Brown, about whom you asked. He was a quick, clever lad ; he was long at the Sunday-school, and answered better in church, and got more rewards, than any other boy in the parish. But it never appeared as if his heart was in the least affected by what he learned, and he was soon known as the smartest lad in the village, and the fondest of a dance or a fair. His parents were too proud of him to check him in his inclinations, and whilst all said, how good-looking and good-natured William was ; they were too well pleased with such commendations, to be anxious to train him up in the way that he should go, by fixing him to regular labour.

‘ My poor Jane, sir, was about a year younger than William ; they had been much together when they were children, and they became fond of each other as they

grew up, till it was commonly said in the village, that we should live see them in a cottage of their own. But about five years ago, my dear girl was taken with the fever, and during her long illness, she was often visited by the minister. She had always been a favourite of his in the Sunday-school. Many an anxious hour had I passed in thinking about her, and many a night, when I had seen her to bed, had I sat up praying for her ; for though she learned readily all that she was set, and was as kind-tempered and as good a daughter as ever blessed a mother's love, yet I could not see that she felt as I wished, about fearing God. I was always afraid that her acquaintance with poor William kept her from thinking of these things—for he was a sad careless lad. But now, the seed that had been so long without any signs of life began to spring up, grow, and promise an abundant harvest. When the fever left

her, and she got strong again, I sadly feared that her serious thoughts would be all forgotten; but I was mistaken, thank God for it. She was altogether different from what she had been before, not but what after awhile her spirits were as good as they had ever been; but she loved prayer, and she loved her Bible, and Sunday was a delight to her now, and she was always thinking how she could do others good. Before, if there was a party to be made for any pleasure, Jane was sure to be one, and she would think about it for days before; but now she seemed to have no liking for such things. She would indeed do all that she could to please her companions; but what she now liked better than anything else, was, to help those who were in any trouble, or show any act of kindness that was within her power to a sick or infirm neighbour. I could see plainly she was still very fond of William. One Sunday afternoon, he came and asked

her to walk with him : she took her bonnet and went, and they were out together for some time. I saw, when they came back, by Jane's countenance, that they had been talking upon some serious subject. She soon told me, that William had asked her to become his wife. He had spoken to his father and mother, and they promised to set him up in a little cottage, where, with his own work, they could do very well. She told him directly, how all her ways of thinking were changed since she was ill, and that she could never marry any one, if she did not believe that he would be a help to her on her way to heaven. 'And you know, William, that is what I cannot think of you, for your head is full of nothing but such pleasures as I lived for once.' She seemed much happier now, as if some great weight had been taken from her mind ; but I could see well what a hard struggle it was for her. William would not give up his hopes, and for some time he seemed to become a

great deal more steady, in order to please her; but it only lasted for a little while, and then wore away again. At last he said he would leave the parish, and go into service. He went away, and we heard that he was gayer than he had ever been. My dear Jane prayed for him many times, and begged me to pray for him too. But the next news of him that came, was, that he had been drowned on a party of pleasure; and we were told that he was not sober when it happened. Poor Jane! she never was the same light-hearted creature again. She tried to prevent my knowing what she felt: but I could often see that she had been crying, when she was alone, and even when she sat with me she would often turn away her head, because her eyes were filling with tears. Then came the finding of his body; and his poor father came home almost heart-broken from the funeral. He seemed never to forget the words that he had heard in

the burial service ; and he said to me when we listened to them again together, not long afterwards, that he had never prayed to Jesus Christ in earnest, or thought seriously about him before. His mother, too, was altogether broken down with grief. Jane was quite a daughter to her ; and when the poor woman fell sick, Jane nursed her as if she had been her own mother. She prayed with her, and she read to her for hours together. I shall never forget our minister coming to me and saying, “ I have just been to see poor Dame Brown, but as I got to the door I heard a voice praying with her, and I stopped to listen—it was your Jane : she was praying with her and for her, and I would not disturb them, but joined heartily in all her petitions, for it seemed as if God was teaching her what to ask for.” It pleased God, as we thought, to bless to the old woman her sorrows and her instructions : for I believe they turned her heart indeed to Him. We followed her to the grave,

and her poor husband was not long after her. He died thanking God who had so heavily afflicted him.

‘ It was but a little while after his death that I began to notice that Jane coughed a great deal : she grew worse and worse, and soon took, for the most part, to her bed. Oh, Sir, it was a blessed thing to hear her pray of a night, when she thought I was asleep. How she would pray for her own soul ; and for me, that I might be supported when she was gone, and I was left alone in the world, a poor childless widow. She lingered on all through the winter ; and it seemed as if the Holy Spirit of God were making her soul every day something fitter for death and for Heaven ; but for her body it was like a withering flower, which drooped and sickened more and more, in spite of all our care and nursing.

‘ When the weather got warmer, she grew all at once weaker. There was a rose she had watched through the early spring,

and it had got one bud that showed for flower: she said to me as she sat in that chair, ‘Mother, I shall not live to see that bud open; but I shall see brighter things than this world can shew; for “He is faithful” in whom I have trusted; and He who was so gracious to me when I never thought of him, and taught me to love and trust in Him, He will not now forsake me.’

‘It was only the next day she was taken from me, I was sitting by her bed-side, and her poor thin hand was in mine—it was worn sadly thin by pain and suffering—she turned her face round to me, and her eyes brightened as if she saw something which was hidden from me. I felt as if an angel must be in the room though I did not see him. And so no doubt there was; one, who was to carry the spirit of my dear girl to her Father’s house. ‘Mother,’ she said, ‘Mother, good bye; the Lord is calling me. He will protect you when you are left alone, and you will not be long after me, and then we shall all meet again, not to be

parted any more: there will be father and little Anne, too. Above all, there will be that dear Saviour who died for us.' She grew very faint here; and her eyes almost closed; but she opened them once more, and turning them again on me she said, with the countenance almost of an angel—'Mother, do not weep, I am happy, I am so happy: the Lord hath pardoned my iniquities for Christ's sake; he is my God.' Her eyes were still fixed on me—her lips moved, but voice was gone—and soon she fell asleep in Jesus, as quietly as I had many times watched her fall asleep in her cradle.

It was a sore parting to me; but I shall not be long behind her, and I have a good hope through grace that we shall meet again, where I shall never have to watch my poor child growing paler and paler; where she shall never know sorrow, but shall dwell before the throne for ever.

I left this good old woman with a saddened but thankful heart. I visited the

church-yard, and looked with a deep interest at the spot where one so young and so lovely lay ; but she is not there ; she is risen—not as yet, indeed, in the body—but she is with Christ, which is far better. The Lord had chastened her because he loved her ; she blossomed early ; her fruit was ripe ; and she was received into the joy of her Lord. A single stone marks, with unpretending simplicity, the spot where Jane was laid. It is still the custom for those who had loved her on earth, and been her constant companions, to deck her grave with the flowers she loved, on the anniversary of her death ; and it is a pleasant band that is there gathered of the young and artless daughters of the village, and then they tell of her sweetness and kindness,—of her sorrowful love and of her happy death. May her memory be like an angel's presence in the midst of them—sweetly infusing into their souls her own high desires and holy purposes.

CONFESSION.

Self-rage for breach of gracious laws,
The worm of conscience which still gnaws :
Confusion, terror, trembling, shame,
And fierce self-blame—

BISHOP KEN.

CONFESSION.

CHAP. I.

" Yes—deep within, and deeper yet.
The rankling shaft of conscience hide ;
Quick let the swelling eye forget,
The tears that in the heart abide."

‘ WHO was that stranger in the Grange Pew this morning, Roger ?’ was the question with which, many years ago, I inquired of my clerk, concerning one whose marked attention at public worship had attracted my especial notice.

‘ She is a Mrs. St. John, Sir, who came into the parish last week, and has taken the little Grange House. She seems to be a nice quiet lady, but nobody knows much about her ; indeed no one can tell where she comes from, or what brought her to settle

here ; neither of her servants can say much of her, for they have only lived six months with her, and then she was staying in a hired house at Brighton, where she knew nobody. She is very fond of being alone, they say, and seems a very low-spirited woman.'

There was but little information to be gleaned from this account. The few positive facts which it disclosed, were probably coloured, perhaps invented, by that universal love of the marvellous which in a remote village like our's is obliged to seize eagerly upon all the scanty materials which can be found to satisfy its craving appetite. I received them therefore with considerable allowance.

A visit which I made at the Grange in the course of the next week, according to my universal custom with new settlers in the parish, did not supply me with much more information concerning Mrs. St. John. She appeared to be about thirty-five, and was, in fact, as I found afterwards, only a few years older. Her manners were quiet and

pleasing, marked, however, with a decided peculiarity, although it was very difficult to say in what it consisted. It had more the appearance of constrained quietness than any thing else, as if she was continually tempted to restlessness, and prevented it by continual self-restraint. Elegance and even expence appeared in the furniture of her little cottage, and every thing around her seemed to mark that she was in affluent circumstances; the choice of situation she attributed to admiration of its quietness and beauty, which she had noticed in passing through it accidentally during the preceding year.

After a few weeks, the curiosity of the village took a fresh direction. The new comer had gradually assumed her place in our society, and she was left to the retirement which she desired, without exciting attention or remark. Mrs. St. John was constantly at church; she was always ready to assist with her purse, our local benevolent

institutions, and was, upon the whole, universally regarded as a very estimable person. She continued to mix very little in the small village circle. The same constitutional or acquired shyness which led her to avoid all intercourse with the higher ranks of our society, prevented also her personal attention to the wants of the poor. But she had a heart ready to enter into their sorrows, and a hand to minister to their necessities, though her servants or others were always employed as her almoners. There was something about her which created in me much interest on her behalf, in spite of the repulsive obscurity in which she wished to conceal herself from view. She had scarcely ever spoken to me without evident constraint. The only instance, indeed, of such apparent openness, which I could remember, was once when our conversation turned naturally upon the scenery of the north of England. She was well-acquainted with it, and spoke of it with a warmth and

animation which I had never before known her countenance or manner display. She paid, however, in all appearance, the penalty even for this transient flash. For she suddenly seemed to sink into thoughts of exceeding painfulness ; and her manner betrayed openly a degree of agitation to which, as much as to pleasurable emotion, it had always been a stranger. It was, I thought, an opportunity of leading her to what might prove useful confidence. The expression of her feelings was too plain not to be remarked, and I endeavoured to induce her to speak of its cause. But it was in vain. She had mentioned to no one the existence of a single relative ; and the postman declared that he had never brought her a letter ; and now when I hoped to have found out whether it was family affliction, or still more personal sufferings, which had eaten so deeply into the springs of her spirit, with the view of leading her from her grief to its remedy, she contrived to parry

every attempt which I made to draw her into conversation.

Matters continued in this train for many months. It was quite evident that there was something peculiar in her circumstances, which coloured her whole life, but which she had no inclination to impart to others; and I greatly feared that this predominant influence, which seemed to tyrannize over her soul, was shutting out from it the healing and refreshing power of the Gospel of the grace of God. There was, indeed, always in her the same marked attention at the time of public worship as there had been when she first attracted my notice; but it was an attention which seemed altogether uncombined with feeling; she listened to the truths of God's word, as though they were interesting facts with which she had no concern whatever. She was like the spectator of some curious sight; not like one whose own happiness, and even existence, were involved in a fearful struggle passing

before her eyes. Though she always left the church before the celebration of the Lord's supper, yet it was not with the careless mien of one utterly unconcerned about religion, but with the apparent reverence of a stranger for the imposing rites of some foreign faith.

She had been almost a year amongst us when she took her usual seat in church on the morning of Ash-Wednesday. She joined with her ordinary propriety in the service of the day; but as I looked round the congregation towards the conclusion of the general address in the Communion Service, I perceived that she was not in her usual place or posture. In the spot where she sat I could observe what passed in her countenance, though she was concealed from the eyes of others by the curtained sides of the pew. The forced calmness of her features was gone;—an agony of expression was settled upon them. She seemed scarcely able to breathe, while with

her eyes rivetted upon the prayer-book, she followed the service as it proceeded. At length the words of hope and promise reached her. The offer of pardon—so full, so free, so universal—sounded in her ear. For an instant she seemed to lay hold upon it. The deep agony of her countenance melted into an expression of softened anguish. She again breathed ; and tears burst forth and fell upon the open book. This was but for a moment, and then their source appeared to be suddenly dried up, and her former countenance of motionless grief succeeded. Once, during the prayers which followed, it seemed that hope was again mingled with the bitterness of sorrow ; her hands were clasped together as if they would wring each other asunder ; and one audible sob mingled with the prayers and confessions of the people of the Lord.

During the whole of my sermon her attention was of a very different kind from that which she had ever before displayed.

The declarations of God's word fell no longer like the rain upon the face of the hard rock, covering its surface, but never penetrating into its substance. They were like the big drops of the summer shower, which the thirsty earth drinks in, and for which she sends up to heaven, in a thousand different ways, the grateful incense of her thankfulness.

The sermon was naturally drawn from the service of the day. The guilt of sin in God's sight, as measured by the standard of perfect holiness; that awful scrutiny which sees acts in the secret thought—effects in their designs—murder in the heart of hatred—this was first insisted on: the certainty of that punishment which hangs over the head of sinners—the fearfulness of its delay, which, like the still pause before the peal of thunder, only gives promise of its awfulness: the case of a sinner who stifles the voice of conscience: and so accustoms his deafened ear to hear un-

moved the terrors of God's law—these things were represented as they are set forth in Holy Writ. And then were dwelt upon, the gracious promise of the gospel—the universal call to repentance—the general offer of pardon to every sinner—the promise of the Spirit to breathe fresh life over the withered soul—to open the springs of holy affection, which the drought of sin had closed—to unseal the fountains of love—to clothe again with vernal beauty the dry and leafless wilderness—these things were brought home to the consciences of those who were present, in the very words of Holy Scripture—all were invited and urged to accept of these offers, —to increase the angels' joy—to turn unto the Lord and live. Many appeared to be affected by the representations made of the mercy of the Saviour; but they seemed to reach no heart so powerfully as that of Mrs. St. John. That she felt most deeply, was perfectly certain, though it was difficult to determine exactly what was passing in her

mind. She left the church as usual, and no one but myself had been able to observe that she had felt anything uncommon, whilst within its walls. In the afternoon she was absent from her accustomed place; but I trusted that I should be able before long to avail myself of some opportunity of intercourse, to assist her trembling steps in treading the difficult path of long-deferred repentance.

CHAPTER II.

' How sweet in that dark hour to fall
On bosoms waiting to receive
Our sighs, and gently whisper all !
They love us—will not God forgive ?'

I HAD intended to take an early opportunity of calling upon Mrs. St. John. Before, however, I had time to put my intention into effect, I received a note from herself, requesting me to call and see her. I lost no time in acceding to her wish. As I walked along the fields, through which lay my nearest road to her house, I lifted up my heart in prayer to our heavenly Father, asking for wisdom to direct, and grace to

strengthen me for speaking aright to her who required my aid. I was soon with her, and was at first astonished at the calmness and self-possession with which she began to speak to me about herself; but this had become as a second nature to her, and her manner at all times exhibited but little trace of the deep spring of feeling which was often-times in full action within her heart.

‘You will excuse, Sir,’ she began, ‘the liberty which I have taken in requesting this visit from you. I know that you will excuse it, although I am almost a stranger to you, and have no rightful claim upon your sympathy or advice.’

I was not slow in assuring her of my anxious wish to be in any way useful to her.

‘I sincerely thank you, Sir, for this kindness,’ she continued, ‘but even now I scarcely know how to begin speaking of that tale of sin and misery which I must open to you, before you can encourage or advise me.’

It was not very easy to see how best to lead her on to speak of that which, whilst her heart wished it uttered, her lips knew not how to pronounce. I said, however, what I could—and she went on.

‘How strange it seems, that without knowing anything of those dark secrets of which my heart is full, you should have spoken so much yesterday, which exactly came home to my case.’

‘Herein,’ I answered her, ‘is the power of God’s word, which is likened to a two edged sword, because it thus searches the conscience, and lays it bare before God.’

‘Indeed it has laid mine bare. I can scarcely believe myself to be the same person that I was yesterday. My existence is different. What I could look at coldly then, seems now utterly to appal me. I am now longing to speak to you of that, which death would not then have wrung from me.’

‘God be praised, my dear Madam, if he has led you from a state of carelessness

about your soul, to desire its salvation earnestly.'

'Oh! I will praise him; even now I could praise him, if he were to enable me to repent indeed; but, Sir, there is such a thing as despair. There is that iron cage, of which you spoke yesterday, wherein a convinced sinner may be held by God's justice to see those sins of which he cannot repent: to shudder before that hell, from which there is no power to fly.'

She spoke all this with such perfect calmness of manner, that a stranger could scarcely have believed her words to come from her heart. But I read in this absence of turbulent emotion, that these drops of bitterness were in truth wrung from her very heart's core. 'The state of desperation', I said, 'is indeed one of the most unknown horror; but your desire to confess your sins to God, whatever they have been, is a hopeful sign that he is giving you the spirit of penitence; and not scaring you with the visions of his wrath.'

‘ Indeed I do desire to be enabled to repent, but can there be hope for me? I have wrestled with convictions; I have stifled conscience; I have hidden my sin; and all the while I have gone on listening to the word of God—if that can be called listening, which has been in truth bending to it a deafened ear.’

‘ These are indeed great sins, but if God has given you grace to see their guilt, there is nothing in them to shut you out from receiving pardon. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin.”’

‘ Yes, I caught at those words yesterday, but can there be pardon for *my* sins? You do not know to what a sinner you are speaking.’

‘ She was pardoned “out of whom went seven devils.” How then should any despair who desire to turn to Christ?’

‘ Yes,’ she resumed, ‘but her sins were committed before she had known Christ; they were not the offences of a baptized

member of the Church of Jesus; and yet her sin was less than mine has been.'

She paused for a moment, but before I could again turn her eyes to the sacrifice offered for sin, she said: 'Sir, I must tell you all, before I can find comfort from what you say; the dark thought still rises in my mind—he would not speak to me thus if he knew all; he deals with me as with a common offender. Hard as it is to debase myself so low before any fellow-creature, I feel that I can have no peace till it is done. May I speak freely to you?'

'Undoubtedly you may, if you judge it to be needful for your comfort; though it is not necessary for your salvation.'

'But what, sir, if my sins should subject me to the punishment of human laws; may I still confess them to you, or will you refuse to hear them?'

This was rather a startling question; it had never occurred to me that I might be placed in such a painful situation by know-

ing what she wished to say to me. Its disclosure might be requisite to prevent future evil, and justice might therefore require that I should insist upon her sin being no longer concealed.

After a moment's silence I endeavoured to explain this to her, and added, 'that she might confess all which burdened her conscience fully to her God. That He did not of necessity require confession to man, except where right was injured by our silence.'

'That is what I feared,' she replied calmly, 'you will not let me tell you my crimes; you will leave me to despair.'

'No, Mrs. St. John, that I will not do; as I said before, if you judge it absolutely needful to your peace, that you should tell me the exact circumstances of that sin with which your conscience is burdened, I am ready to listen to you; but I would have you act herein upon the calmest and most deliberate judgment.'

'I have thought over it, it is no hasty

resolution ; no easy determination, it was a perfect rending of my heart before I could resolve to do it.'

Once more I told her that she might speak to me without fear ; but wishing her to act only upon the most settled determination, I left her for that day, promising to resume our conversation on the morrow, and only urging her before I went, to pray earnestly for grace to enable her to lay hold firmly of the sure promise of forgiveness made to all penitent sinners by Jesus Christ. The next day I found her awaiting my arrival. There was the same calmness, and the same hidden energy of feeling in her whole manner. It was some time before our conversation assumed any thing of a settled tone ; and even then it was with many interruptions that she imparted to me the story of her life. The sum of her account shall be thrown together in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

Tell. Heaven has wrath that can relent no more—
The grave, dark deeds that cannot be undone.

I WAS born in the town of ———, of which my father was at that time the Rector. He died whilst I was very young, leaving just sufficient property to provide for the widow who survived him, and the daughter who had lost a father's care. My mother moved from the town of ———, and settled at C——, where a brother of my father's practised as an eminent surgeon. My mother did not survive her husband many years; and I was still a mere girl when I was transferred by her death to my uncle's care. He was a

kind, indulgent man, and full of affection towards me ; but having never married, or known any thing of female society, he was not the most fit guardian for his orphan niece. No expence was spared in my education ; and as I readily acquired accomplishments, I found many to admire and flatter my early talents. I grew up from being a spoiled child, into an undisciplined maturity. At this time a young man who was the son of an old friend of my uncle's, came to pay him a visit. We were naturally thrown together, and an attachment was soon formed between us. It was not long before it was declared ; and as there were no impediments in the way, our approaching marriage was soon acknowledged. He had a small fortune in the north of England, and with my father's property, and my expectations from my uncle, it was in all respects a suitable alliance. It was determined that it should take place in about three months ; as my intended husband had to pay a visit

to some near relations, and arrange some family business in the north before his marriage, he left me with many vows of continued affection, and I believe with sincere attachment. For a time his letters continued to breathe the same language—then they grew colder, and at length they were entirely intermitted. At first when they ceased, I concluded that he was about immediately to return, and wished to surprise me with his unexpected arrival. In time however I could no longer cherish this hope, I began to entertain the gloomiest apprehensions of his altered or estranged affections. Yet when I looked at the locket which he had given me when we parted, or read over the letters which he had written when he had first left me, I knew not how to listen to these apprehensions. My uncle had grown very infirm and unobservant of late, and had resigned most of his business into the hands of a young apprentice, who by my engagement had long annoyed

me with his secret addresses. My altered spirits were however at last noticed by my uncle; and having made out the cause of my trouble, he was about to write to the young man, and bring him to some explanation. Just at this time, as I took up the paper to read to him after dinner, my eye glanced in the list of marriages upon the name of my faithless lover, as united to a young lady of the north, who was designated as a considerable heiress. The paper dropt from my hands, and I fell back in my chair, almost fainting. My uncle soon learnt the whole, and did what he could to comfort me. I was most deeply wounded. My affections had been entirely fixed upon my intended husband—they therefore had been sorely lacerated—my vanity too was grievously offended. I had never been used to contradiction or disappointment, and could scarcely brook the most trifling opposition to my wishes. By this neglect and sorrow I was almost maddened. I knew not what

I did ; and in a fit of rage and anger against him who had deserted me, I consented to elope from my uncle's house with his apprentice. We were secretly married, and repaired to a neighbouring town, whence we purposed shortly returning to seek a reconciliation with my uncle. This purpose had not been executed, when the news reached us that he had suddenly died in a fit. He had left me his sole heir, and it was necessary that we should immediately return to his house. With what a heavy heart did I re-enter it. How bitterly did I accuse myself, of having caused perhaps his death, by my unkind and foolish desertion of his house. How miserable was I, in the prospect of the portion which I had chosen, wedded to a man whom I had never loved, but whom I had married in a fit of anger against another. Ashamed of myself, of my husband, and of my conduct, I scarcely knew what to do. This state of feeling was not very likely to make my

married life happy. My husband was a coarse-minded, uneducated person, with a degree of affection for me, but much more for my fortune, which he found entirely in his own power. He could not bear with my waywardness of temper, and evident contempt of his manners. Differences soon arose between us ; they grew up into quarrels, and from these began a settled feeling of disgust within me, against him whom I had wilfully chosen as the partner of my life. We had left the town of C—— immediately after concluding my uncle's affairs ; for I could not bear to continue in a place where my misfortunes and my follies were in every one's mouth. In the distant part of the country where we had settled, we were both of us altogether unknown. My husband's manners were not such as would naturally entitle us to the attention of the gentry in the town where we were now established, and therefore, in spite of our comparative wealth, we were thrown

into a lower grade of society than that which I had been used to occupy. This again rankled in my mind, and made me more ill-tempered and peevish towards him, upon whom I charged, what was in fact the fruit of my own folly. The natural consequence of this was, that my company became more and more distasteful to him. Having no resources within himself, and being thus prevented from seeking for domestic comfort, he was naturally led to find his pleasures in the company of those whom he could command as associates. These were young men of his own age, and of similar habits; attorneys' clerks, young surgeons, or the underlings of some of the great mercantile houses. With them he was a person of the utmost importance. His command of money gave him great weight with them, because it put unnumbered gratifications within their reach. He was flattered and followed by all; and moulded by the cleverest amongst them to

their own purposes. The vulgarity of his mind, soon enabled them to gain a strong influence over him. He was their companion at the race course, at billiards, at the tavern, and by degrees, in all the low abodes of debauchery. I had fallen meanwhile into sullen indifference as to whatever he did. His manners, his company, his excesses, all filled me with unspeakable disgust, but I never attempted to reclaim him from them. At times I would break forth indeed into violent abuse or cutting reproaches, but for the most part, I merely manifested towards him silent contempt and settled hatred. My heart I felt was getting every day colder and harder. I hated my husband, and every one around me; I even hated myself; nor did I ever endeavour for a moment to rouse myself from this miserable condition. We had now been settled for five or six years in our new neighbourhood, and every month which passed, degraded my husband's character still lower. He was

the companion of all the dissolute and disreputable young men in the town. He seldom opened his mouth in my presence, except to reply to some cutting reproaches, with oaths or blasphemies; and was continually brought home in a state of the most complete and brutal intoxication. This mode of life had proceeded to such a pitch, that his health was seriously impaired, and the surgeon who attended him, threatened him with an attack of apoplexy, as the probable . result of a continuance in it. He returned however, without a pause, to his former courses, as soon as he was able to leave the house. I had reached so miserable a state of mind, that I felt perfectly careless of any thing which befel him. It would not have given me pleasure, but neither would it in the least have pained me, had he fallen a victim to intemperance, or perished in a drunken broil; and as to the probability of his extravagance reducing us to poverty, this I rather desired than not, because I thought that when

deserted by his sunshine friends, he would at last feel my reproaches. Such was the course of our lives, when the post brought me one day a letter, which at once roused me from that malignant apathy into which I had by degrees subsided. It was from the only sister of him who had been intended for my husband. It had followed me from the town of C——, to which she had directed it. So complete had been the interruption of all intercourse between us, that I had never heard his name mentioned since our correspondence ceased, nor did he even know of my marriage. The object of the letter was to tell me that her brother, after an unhappy marriage of six years, had lost his wife ; that during the whole of her life, he had never for a moment forgotten me : that I had always possessed his affections, even when he was cunningly inveigled into a marriage with another ; that if I was still unmarried, and could forgive the past, he might yet be happy, and would wait only

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for my permission to write or hasten to me. The whole was so simply, and yet earnestly told by his sister, that I could not doubt its truth ; yet with what madness did it fill my soul ; my affections, which had never since my marriage found any thing on which to fix, fastened instantly again upon their former object. My pride was gone, and I would have given worlds to be able at once to write to him, to assure him of his entire forgiveness, and bid him hasten to me ; and ‘ all this happiness,’ I said to myself, ‘ which was still in store for me, all this I have wilfully cast from me, to gratify my anger. Oh, fearfully have I been punished for the grief of heart which I caused my uncle.’ I could write no answer to the letter which I had received. I vainly raged, and dashed myself against the bars, with which my own free choice had environed me. My hatred to my husband became more intense than ever. He was not merely my disgrace, my torment, and my punishment ; he now

appeared to be the only obstacle which stood between me and happiness. I knew not how impossible it was for outward circumstances to confer peace upon me, whilst my heart was full of all evil passions. Such, therefore, was my feeling, and my hatred of my husband was proportionably increased; still I had never yet been tempted to any specific crime against him; my heart was not sufficiently saturated with hate; it was not fully ripe for the temptations which afterwards assailed me. It was not very long before I received a second letter from the same quarter; its tenor was precisely the same. It pressed me with even more earnestness than before for a favourable answer. It described the anxiety of her brother's mind; the restless interchange of faint hope and gloomy depression; and begged me, whatever was my decision, to concede at least so much to former affection, as to write to him myself, and acquaint him with my feelings. This letter almost unsettled my

reason ; for although I had even then acquired that perfectly calm exterior which you cannot but have noticed ; and which sprung at first from sullen pride and bitter hatred ; yet the convulsions of my heart which were concealed beneath this iron mask were truly terrific. I began at length to write ; I poured forth bitter reproaches against his unfaithfulness ; I painted my hopeless misery, and spoke of him as its cause ; at first this vent of its rage seemed to allay the irritation of my soul ; but then my affection towards him made me as passionately destroy the letter. I had been writing again—had confessed my affection—and told him of my misery,—and again I had destroyed this letter too, and was sitting in speechless anguish, seeing no winding, no doubling, by which I might haply escape from the destructive toils in which I had involved myself, when my husband was brought home from one of his carousals in a state of brutal intoxication. My first impression

when I saw him, was, that he had lost his life in some drunken frolic, and my first feeling was one of *joy*, of satisfied hatred, of unexpected deliverance. But in a moment I was undeceived, and again every other feeling was swallowed up in sensations of unutterable loathing and disgust. Then it was, when my heart was ripe for it, by harbouring and gloating on its malignant passions, that the tempter first suggested to me darker thoughts than any in which I had yet indulged. Then it was that it was just hinted to me, that a way of escape *did* lie open to me; that his death would set me free; that his habits of life made his death possible, nay, probable; and there were other yet more deadly thoughts following up these which were just sketched before my eyes. Oh, had I then wrestled with the evil one: oh, had I offered up one prayer for deliverance: oh, had I once asked for grace, from what a load of remembered sin might my soul still be free.

But instead of this, I cherished these thoughts of evil—I warmed the viper in my bosom: I tempted the tempter, and he did indeed come to me; for the most part of that night I lay awake in a hardened, calcinating commerce of thought with the extremest iniquity: when I did at last fall asleep, it was only to dream of the same evil subjects; the happiness almost within my grasp, the misery actually present. The subtle enemy pursued me even in sleep. The crime was light—it was committed—it had been successful—and I was happy! I started from my restless slumbers to that sickening reality of woe, which after such visions, overwhelms returning sense. The day was a day of misery—after a scene of bitter reproach on my side, and blasphemous passion on his, my husband left me to rejoin his dissolute companions. He had a particular engagement to spend the day with them, and he went to renew the excesses which had disgusted me so

deeply the night before. When he had left me alone, the temptations of the evil one became darker and more abundant. I let my mind dwell upon what he suggested as a possibility—my wrongs were remembered—his utterly depraved character, which was hardening every day—our almost exhausted resources. I pondered over these things with the bitterest feelings of remorse and hatred, until I was prepared for any wickedness. I was upon the tempter's ground; how could I but fall his prey. The suggestions of evil were poured into my mind; so violent were they, that I fancied I could almost hear an audible voice say, 'Poison him—poison him!' It is strange, even to myself, that I did not start with horror from the suggestion—but instead of doing so, I indulged it, and soon I was actually overcome. In the cupboard in my husband's room, was a small parcel of arsenic, which had long lain there unnoticed. I took it, and impregnated with it some cakes, of

which my husband was very fond. I determined even that very night to leave them in his way; accordingly in the evening, I placed them on the table in the dining-room, leaving the wine by them, and went up stairs to wait for his return. At last, I thought I heard him come, and for the first time I realized what I had done; the street door opened, I thought that it was too late to attempt to remove them, and I sat in a perfect agony of alarm. In a few minutes all was quiet, and this convinced me that it was a stranger's call. Thankful for this deliverance, I sprung up, and as soon as the servant was gone down stairs, rushed into the room to secure and destroy the instruments of evil; almost before I was in the room, a loud and noisy knocking at the door announced the reality of my husband's arrival. The hasty steps of the servant, as he hurried to his master's impatient summons, shewed me that not a moment was to be lost; but what

could I do ? I could not escape unnoticed up stairs. In despair I seized the plate, and pushed it to the further end of a closet which we seldom used. I went directly to meet him. To my question of what had brought him home so much earlier than usual, I got little or no answer ; but I soon found that he was very far from sober, and in a violent passion. He had quarrelled with his usual dissolute companions. Partly through sport, and partly perhaps to engage him in play, they had drugged his wine. He discovered the fact after he had taken a considerable quantity, but not enough to cause the stupor which a little more would have ensured. A quarrel had arisen in consequence of the discovery ; and being unusually excited by the effect of the wine and drugs, he had broken out into a furious passion, and left them with the utmost violence. His anger was now directed against all whom he met with ; and his boisterous rage in a moment

revived within me all the evil passions which the late agitation and alarm of my mind had for a short season dispelled. I left him, with all the bitter and hardened feelings which were too familiar to my heart. I soon heard him ringing furiously for more wine, and learned that he was determined to finish his carousal at home ; he was at last carried up stairs perfectly insensible.'

At this period of her story Mrs. St. John's apparent calmness entirely forsook her. She was seized with a sort of convulsive affection resulting from the violent struggles of suppressed agitation. It was frightful to me to witness this; for the strange contrast between the perfect calm—the apparent apathy which she commonly exhibited, and this impetuous storm of feeling which now overcame her, made me fear greatly lest the stern controul which she commonly maintained over her feelings, might not be in reality too much for human nature, and lead to some fearful result. I would have interrupted

her story for the present with the view of calming her emotions, but she would not allow me to go; and after a little while continued her account.

‘ Yes, sir, that was his last night, he never woke again except in the most extreme agony; it lasted but for a few minutes, and life was extinct. But what were my feelings!—my first impulse was to fly to the room where I had left that by which I had intended to effect what other means, as I thought, had brought about. The instinct of self-preservation made me desire their destruction, lest any inquiry into the cause of my husband’s death should involve me in the charge of having committed the crime of which I deemed myself innocent. I saw at once, on entering the room, amongst the marks of the dreadful intemperance of the miserable man, that it was my hand which had caused his death. The cupboard was open—the cakes had been taken down—had been eaten—had produced their effect—and

he was a corpse ! My mind was stunned by the violence of conflicting feelings ; an overwhelming fear of what might be the consequences of my crime ; the shame—the death which my malignant passions had probably prepared for myself—the sense of my guilt—the feelings of horror—the excuses of the tempter—and, must I speak it, yes, even in that dreadful hour, the joy of my deliverance,—all these things pressed upon me at once, with an insupportable violence. Yet my circumstances required that I should do much ; and I forced myself from these meditations to begin immediately to act. The news of my husband's death was spread abroad. My dread was that a coroner's inquest would be considered necessary. But there were none to care about the unhappy man. The mouths of his late companions were stopped, because they dreaded as much as I did the result of an inquest. They attributed his death to the effects of those drugs which they had given

him with the view of producing only unconsciousness and stupor. The neighbours set it down to the effects of his habitual and disgraceful intemperance; and his recent illness gave a strong colour of probability to this idea. In his own house the same notion was prevalent. He was hated by all his servants for his violence and passion; and what could be a more natural termination of that disgraceful scene which they had witnessed on the preceding evening than a sudden attack of apoplexy and death. Thus far then it seemed that the evil spirit had made my way of wickedness prosperous. His funeral was past. No suspicions had been excited—and I could not but consider myself as out of danger. But you may readily believe that I was not easy. Although I had already begun to quiet my conscience by persuading myself that I had not willingly caused his death, yet I could enjoy no peace of mind. I could not bear to continue longer at L——; and as there was nothing

unnatural in my leaving it, I determined, after arranging what matters of business remained unsettled, to remove to a distance from this scene of my misery. But I carried with me to my new abode that distempered heart which was the cause of my suffering. I had nothing, indeed, now in my situation to call forth those passions of hatred and contempt which had lately ruled in my soul. I was endeavouring to quiet the stings of conscience—not, alas! by seeing my guilt, and seeking for its true remedy; but by inventing excuses for my sin, and vainly seeking to palliate its enormity. To silence the voice of God within me was now my great object, and the enemy of my soul was, no doubt, well contented that I should; as it prevented my making any attempt to be cleansed from my iniquity. It is now almost inconceivable to myself, how I could succeed in shutting my eyes to my guilt—how far my vain and weak excuses hid from me the reality of my wickedness. Not that I ever knew what

true peace was. I had continually present with me, an aching remembrance of uneasiness—a sense that all was not right—a secret suspicion of my dangerous state—but I was daily more and more able to lose sight of this as far as it was a governing principle of action. I sheltered myself under the thought, that I had not intended to commit the crime which pressed upon me. I became, too, very regular in my observance of all the outward ordinances of God; I gave liberally to the poor—in short I was more and more successful in quieting the accuser within me. Just at this time, I received a third letter from the sister of Mr. St. John. It once more, and for the last time, pressed for an answer to the applications which she had made to me before. After many struggles, I determined upon my reply: it was long before my conscience, blunted as it had now become, would allow me to grasp the fruits of my past sin. Although the promise of it had

undoubtedly been one great instrument in the tempter's hands, in leading me into the commission of crime; yet when the deed was effected,—when my husband had been cut off in the midst of his iniquities, when the fear of a disgraceful punishment had overtaken me: and afterwards, when conscience would scarcely let me revert to that which had been the bait to lead me on to destruction—for all this time I had been utterly unable to think of answering the letter which I had already received: and even now, when the application was renewed, it was not without a grievous conflict between inclination, and a conscience not thoroughly asleep, that I acceded to the proposal, and became within a few months afterwards, the wife of Mr. St. John. But oh, how true is the declaration of Scripture, that “there is no peace for the wicked.” For even now, when I had reached the height of my desire; when I was reposing on that very spot, which from

a distance, had appeared to be gilded by the fullest bursts of sunshine. Even at this moment I was miserable. I found that the place which I had chosen for myself was strewed with thorns. It was impossible that a heart which had been hardened as mine had been, could soften at once into all the soothing feelings of domestic affection : the storms of hatred, the blights of scorn, had swept over it, and marred the face of nature : it was in vain that vernal seasons smiled upon me ; for *me* there was no second spring. I had been benumbed : I had become insensible, through the icy coldness in which every feeling had been long subdued, and the suddenness of the warmth which was now shed around them, gave them not again the glow of health. It was with a fitful and dangerous rapidity, that the blood flowed again through my veins ; it was with an universal sense of pain and suffering, that I felt myself restored to existence. If I enjoyed for a moment any pleasure,

my heart throbbed immediately with the remembrance of what had passed over me. As, too, I had no living person to whom I could impart my feelings, they preyed the more painfully upon my own heart ; while they formed in me, more and more, that deceitful outward calm which seems to mock the hidden struggles of my soul. Nor were other causes of sorrow wanting. The only infant, whose smile had ever cheered my comfortless soul, lived but just long enough to draw out the affections of a mother towards her ; to let me wind my heart-strings around her, and then she was taken from me, as one too pure to be entrusted longer to the care of the dark and miserable being, which sin had made me. A few years more passed over me, and I was left a widow also, desolate upon the face of the earth, torn in every affection, and entirely crushed in heart ; behind me was remorse ; with me, anguish ; before me, despair. After wandering through different parts of our land, I settled as you know, in this village.

Here I have begun to learn my real state ; here the veil has been torn down, and I do indeed see my miserable guilt. I have been long striving against the conviction of it, but I see it now. I see that in God's sight, I am stained with my husband's blood. I see that I am a thing which man despises, and which God abhors. Oh sin!—cursed sin—this is thy work !'

The calmness with which Mrs. St. John had spoken, seemed entirely lost as she reached the conclusion of her tale of misery. Indeed, for some time past, her manner had outwardly betrayed the bitterness of the storm which raged within. I had in vain endeavoured to persuade her to defer the relation of her history till the next day. I had become alarmed for her ; her smothered, yet bursting emotions, forcibly reminded me of the dreadful swell, which from below his feet, reaches the ear of the affrighted huntsman, as he passes over the vast field of ice which chains the surface of

the northern seas. At first he listens to its faint sound; soon he hears its crashing roar; the ice begins to swell beneath his tread, and to subside again with a painful and unsteady motion; it cracks, it shivers, it separates into a thousand islands. So it appeared now to be with her. She stopped abruptly in the middle of this last sentence, and begun to manifest the full effects of her long and stubbornly-maintained compression of emotion. I was obliged to call in her servants to her assistance: and it was not till late at night, that the sedatives which were administered to her, had produced any effect in calming her excited nerves. My visit was thus terminated abruptly, and I left her cottage with a mind full of the affecting details which I had heard. Here was the mystery of her frozen exterior completely explained. It was deep-seated and smothered remorse preying upon her vitals; and how had she been led into this state? How had the light-hearted and happy girl, full of spirits and accomplish-

ments, delighting in her own powers, and in the affectionate admiration of her friends—unthwarted and almost uncontrolled—how had she been brought into this unhappy frozen state of being? Alas! how powerful an alchemist is sin; how can it extract the bitter principle of a living death from every material? How can its touch turn every substance into the elements of destruction? Yet even of her I had now good hopes: her heart was evidently touched; the frost was fast dissolving, and though no worldly power or pleasure could ever again clothe the wintry scene with beauty, yet, what is too hard for the Lord? Thou, Lord, canst add this hardened heart to the trophies of thy grace. Thou canst speak peace to this wounded conscience; and even from the dust of sin and the ashes of contrition, canst bid her raise her voice in joy and thanksgiving. Thou canst refine these dregs of a mis-spent life, and turn them to thy praise. O Lord, work this work within her, and let the glory be thine!

CHAPTER IV.

"And is there in God's world so drear a place,
Where the loud bitter cry is raised in vain?"

MY visit to the Grange was not long delayed. The very next morning I was with Mrs. St. John in good time. The first thing which struck me was, an unusual restlessness of manner, which gave me great uneasiness on her account. A stranger might not, perhaps, have noticed it: but to my feelings it formed a most alarming contrast with her usual extreme quietness. I found her under the deepest dejection and alarm. Upon inquiry I learned that she had not slept at all during the night, and had

appeared to her servants to be in a most distressing state of nervous excitement; but they were entirely ignorant of its cause. She began to speak to me of the subject as soon as the door was closed, and I was seated by her.

‘How terrible, Sir, is the awakening of a conscience which has been long asleep; how horrible is its voice; there is not, I believe, a single thought or word of hatred which defiled my heart or mouth through those miserable years of evil, which has not now returned, with separate tongue, to reproach me for my sin. Things which I have never remembered since they were committed, there they stand fresh and black in guilt, upbraiding and condemning my soul. What hope can I have of pardon? Here are the very torments of hell begun already.’

I endeavoured to soothe her, and taking up her last words, I answered her, ‘Yes, it is perfectly true that remorse of conscience will be one of the bitterest pangs

of that world of punishment. We cannot doubt that it will ; but then it is not such remorse as can be felt on this side of the grave. What will make its sting so intolerable *there*, is, that it is hopeless. That there is no room for deliverance from it ! No hope of a Saviour's help : *here* there is always this hope. And even to you there is, I trust, balm in his message of mercy. There is, remember, mercy for the very chief of sinners ; there is forgiveness for all who will come unto Jesus Christ for it.'

' I know, Sir, that there is ; for it was the thought of that which first moved me to think of my sin ; it was hearing of Christ's mercy, which made the sound of his threatening so fearful in my ears. But what I fear is, that I cannot come to Christ. I see my great sinfulness. I am full of horror at the sight of it. I cannot for a single moment fly from the remembrance of it ; but I fear I have no godly sorrow—I have no penitent feeling. I tremble before God's

holiness. I am maddened by the sight of his justice. I cannot bear to think of his power; but I have none of the feelings of a child towards an angry parent. What I wish for is, that God should not be—or be so holy, or so powerful. Is not this a sign that I am given up to a reprobate mind?’

‘You are strongly tempted to despair; but I trust, that through God’s grace, you may yet be rescued from it. It is the common method which Satan adopts: he would make us think lightly of sin, until it is committed. He tells us that it will be easy to repent hereafter, and thus having lulled conscience to sleep, triumphed over us, and led us into his toils, then he turns round, and becomes the accuser; then he sounds in our ears the cry of vengeance—he turns the glass, and magnifies our guilt, and bids us despair of pardon, that he may keep us from the Saviour. Oh! this is a dreadful temptation, Mrs. St. John; it robs the cross of its virtue, the Saviour of his power.’

‘ Yet, what can I do for comfort ? There seems to be a voice within me, accusing me continually. I seem to have the mark of Cain set upon me—my heart tells me, that this is why I was spared ; that I might live to be a lasting monument of the burning wrath of an Almighty God.’

‘ But this is the very temptation to despair, against which I have been warning you. You are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God. Thoughts altogether injurious to his goodness and his truth. For he has *promised* to forgive the sins of all who truly turn to him for pardon through the blood of the Redeemer ; and though it seems to you, that you think of nothing but your own guilt ; yet you do truly doubt, either his power to save you, or the truth of his promise that he will. Turn from these hard thoughts of him, and remember that merciful declaration, “ The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” ’

‘ Oh ! I have tried to think so ; but it

seems as if Scripture and conscience alike testified against me. If I would speak of the blood of Christ in prayer, the blood of Abel rises on my tongue instead, and crieth for vengeance against me. If I say, "Lord, have mercy upon me," it seems as if my prayer were answered at once, by the reproaches of him towards whom I showed no mercy—whom I cut off in the very midst of his sins, and sent into the presence of his Judge, before he had time to offer up one prayer, to put up one petition for pardon.'

'These, you see, are all the feelings of your own mind. You must not put them against the word of God's promise. *He* has declared to all, that if they will but turn unto him, they shall have life.'

'Yes, Sir, *if they turn*, but there is the very seal of my despair, *I cannot turn*. I might have turned—even after my great sin, I might have turned. I *know* that God often called me to repentance—and I believe, that if I would have listened

to him, he would have given me grace, and made me able to repent. He called me by my first alarms; he called me by blighting all my happiness when I was again married; he called me by my infant's death; he has called me a thousand times by the voice of conscience within me: but I have refused to listen: I have stifled conscience: I have quieted its alarms, and therefore has he awoke against me to judgment—therefore has he turned and become my enemy—therefore does he rage against me with all his storms. Oh! that I could speak to other sinners who are beginning to stifle the voice of conscience, and warn them by the awfulness of a hardened heart, not to continue in their sin, “lest they also come into this place of torment.”

Having endeavoured as far as I could to answer all her suggestions, I concluded that the best mode of dealing with the unhappy woman would be, to read to her, with but few comments, some of the most

gracious promises of the word of God ; and then to endeavour to lead her into prayer ; that the eye of even a trembling faith might be raised to Him who “ will save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.” I read to her, accordingly, the xvth chapter of St. Luke’s gospel, together with a few separate verses, and then prayed with her, that the Lord would vouchsafe to give unto her that mercy and grace of which she stood so evidently in need.

I left her in what I hoped was a somewhat calmer state of mind. I trusted that there was the first dawning of a feeble hope within her ; and that it would of the Lord’s goodness be hereafter abundantly brightened and increased.

I have given this conversation at the more length, because I wished to shew what was actually the state of her mind. I shall not in future transcribe what passed between us. It became, alas ! too frightful and horrible to be recorded. I was daily

with her. I spent at first many hours in conversing with her and opening to her in the richest abundance, the full stores of gospel mercy, but it was all in vain. I will continue my account by giving some extracts from a few entries which I made from time to time after I had been with her.

Feb. 28.—‘ Poor Mrs. St. John seems worse to-day; utterly unable to take the comfort of any of the promises; and less soothed than heretofore by the reading of the scriptures and prayer. The struggle is so violent, that I tremble for her reason.’

March 1.—‘ Spent an hour at the Grange this morning. What a sight is a conscience writhing under the inflictions of an angry God! What a place must hell be! Oh! that I could take some of my people, who are yet flattering themselves in their own eyes, and lulling conscience to sleep, to see what its awakening will be. Her thoughts run continually upon future punishment, and nothing appears for a moment to relieve

her. She said to me to-day, shuddering as she spoke it, 'Do you think that the damned will be able to reproach and hate one another? Shall we know each other there? Will there be a record there of the separate sins committed here?' Poor creature! it seems as if upon her was indeed poured the full vial of the wrath of God.'

March 6.—'Having been absent since the preceding date, I have not been able till to-day again to visit Mrs. St. John. Her state perfectly appals me; and I find that her servants hardly dare to continue with her. She has never spoken before them of the subject which is torturing her mind; but they can read plainly in her expression of agony, her agitated countenance, and straining eyes, that there is a dreadful struggle going on within. God grant that it may not end in madness.'

March 7.—'My visits to the Grange become every day more deeply painful. This morning poor Mrs. St. John has been

sentencing herself, in the most awful terms, to everlasting destruction. Her ears are stopped to the offers of the gospel. It is remarkable that she seems overwhelmed with horror at the thought of her having so long hardened her heart against God, even more than at the recollection of that murder, the guilt of which she charges so unceasingly upon her conscience. ‘I might,’ she said to-day, ‘I might have been forgiven his death: yes, blood might have been forgiven me. But I have done more than shed blood: I have hardened conscience until it cannot feel, I have deafened my ear until it cannot listen to the message of mercy; I have resisted the Lord until he has refused longer to strive with me. Oh that those who are yet hardening their hearts might hear me! Surely they could not go on heaping up this wrath unto themselves, if they could see, in the instance of another, how devouring are its flames! Oh! hell! hell! hell! how shall I endure its tor-

ments, if I cannot bear these pangs which are but its forerunners !’

‘ I could do nothing which seemed to quiet her to-day. That must be God’s work ; and I cannot give up my hope that when he hath pleaded for a while longer in his jealousy with this broken heart, that he may turn again and refresh her. I thought it necessary to press her most strongly to put force upon herself in the presence of others. I trust that this sort of self-command may preserve awhile longer the empire of reason which now totters within her.’

March 12.—‘ For the last five days I have attended Mrs. St. John without observing any material difference in her miserable condition. She is undoubtedly sinking more and more fixedly into the gulf of despair. To-day for the first time she manifested an evident repugnance to hear me pray with her. She was like a person struggling to swallow, and prevented by violent convulsive spasms. She desired and yet could not

endure that we should pray together.—How will this end ?’

March 13.—‘The bad symptoms which I remarked yesterday were much increased to-day. She would not hear of prayer, and would scarcely allow me to mention the name of the Saviour. I watched her closely, to see if there was any proof of her reason being impaired ; but I can see nothing else which suggests the idea of absolute insanity. She is still careful to abstain from speaking of her state of mind before her servants, attributing her distress to a nervous fever.’

March 14.—‘Instead of welcoming me as usual with joy, poor Mrs. St. John seemed to regard my approach with absolute horror. The struggle of her feelings brought on a paroxysm of decided madness ;—without any regard as heretofore to the presence of the servants, she began at once to say—‘What brings you here ? You know I cannot pray ! What has a mur-

deress to do with prayer? You know that I am hardened by God! Though I make many prayers he would not hear. He has shut me up in despair, because I shut my ear to his voice. He has given me over to a reprobate mind, because I stifled conscience and hid my sin. What has a minister of Jesus Christ to do with a lost soul?' This violence became so great as to alarm me for her personal safety, and finding that my presence tended to aggravate her disorder, I left her room at once. I ordered her servants to watch by her, and let me know if any sudden emergency required additional assistance. After warning them not to be startled by any thing which her delirium might lead her to utter, and promising to send at once for the surgeon who had been attending her for some days, I left her under their charge.'

March 15.—'All medical aid fails of administering any relief to poor Mrs. St. John. She has now had no lucid interval since last

night; her violence is so much increased that she must be confined.'

March 22.—'This morning my unhappy patient was conveyed to a private asylum at D——. She now raves incessantly; continually accusing herself of having murdered her husband; and still more loudly of having resisted an upbraiding conscience.'

I was in the habit of receiving periodical accounts after this of the state in which she continued. They lasted for many months without the communication of any new fact of importance. At length I received one which informed me that she had just had a lucid interval, which continued for some hours; that in it she had manifested such extreme weakness of body, as soon as the inward violence of feeling had subsided, that it was thought impossible for her to bear up much longer under the exhaustion consequent upon her mental disorder. It was further said that during the few hours in which her reason was clear,

she had appeared to be free from despair, though full of dejection. That she was much in prayer—repeated often over that gracious declaration, “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin;” and expressed an earnest desire to have an interview with me. That amongst other things she said to her attendant, ‘If I do not see him, tell him that I am grateful to him for having been the instrument who awoke me from my sleep of sin.’ It was added, that just when they were going to send for me, she suddenly relapsed into her former state of raving madness.

The next account which I received was, that all was over; her bodily strength had been evidently failing rapidly for the last week; but to the very end the energy of her spirit kept her from sinking. She had no other lucid interval before her death. However, just before its convulsive struggles came on, the wildness of her countenance faded from her, and left a mild expression

upon her features. She seemed to be endeavouring to clasp her hands in prayer, when she started—drew one long sobbing breath, and expired.

Alas! unhappy woman! bitterly didst thou groan beneath the load of sin—heavily did its fetters press upon thee. We trust indeed that a gleam of heavenly light did struggle at last through the darkness of thy soul. Thine end was not altogether without hope. But whilst we acknowledge this with thankfulness of heart—yet is there not here written, as in characters of fire, a fearful warning against slumbering in sin? Is there not an awful testimony against living under the curse of unpardoned guilt? against stifling the voice of conscience, and continuing easy under the sense of unrepented iniquity?

THE HALL.

' In heaven accounts of sighs are kept,
Of every tear that's wept ;
Saints feel the blessings back they bring,
Swift as angelic wing :
The humble what they beg obtain,
And never sigh in vain.'

BISHOP KENN.

THE HALL.

CHAPTER I.

FEW are the visitors who have explored the beauties of the pleasant village of B—. Of all the innumerable tribes whom the summer sends forth to wander over the earth, countless as the gnats which people the moist air of a mild winter's day, or as the shoals of finny fry which the inexhaustible north produces; few of them all have been seen within our confines. Though, in this erratic country, health and sickness, poverty and wealth, idleness and business, sorrow and pleasure, a wedding and a funeral, alike compel our mercurial coun-

trymen to travel hither and thither; to hurry through this district, and hasten over that; and generally to grumble through all, as if they were flying from companions who were continually proving that they could travel as quickly as themselves; in spite of all these different causes, and various companies, rarely have we, quiet inhabitants of B—, seen the sketch book of the accomplished loiterer; or figured in the diary of the travelling author. And yet we have scenery to shew, in which a Claude would not have despised to find the subject of his pencil, when the glowing sun streams in golden lustre over the waves of our rocky coast; and we have legends and tales to tell which might perchance, even in their simple language, bring tears to many a gentle eye, or banish the colour from many a fair cheek. But we are in the neighbourhood of scenery familiar to every hunter after happiness; and well it is for us that this draws away the stream of

strangers with which we might otherwise be inundated. It was not, however, always thus with us. There was a time when the rattling wheels of the travelling carriage, and the cracking whip of the postboy were no unusual sound in our village. Many were the tingling heads which could have testified of old to the vigilance with which the care of the veteran schoolmaster repressed the rustic curiosity, which tempted his unruly charge to steal their eager peep through the rusted and dingy panes of the ancient window; frequent was the half-pennyworth of gingerbread which the old dame of our shop imparted to the active urchin who had opened gates for the generous travellers. Many were the carriages on which the aforesaid gates had closed midway, in the eager scuffle which ensued to catch the flying treasure; at which joyful sight, the charge of the gate was altogether forgotten, and the young varlets, like slipped greyhounds, rushed pell-mell one over another, to secure the

envied prize. At this time the family seat of the St. Aubyns was the constant residence of its kind-hearted owner, and many were the friends who received his hearty welcome, and remained to be charmed by his courteous hospitality. It is a stately house even now, though silence has so long reigned in its halls; though its court-yard is all grown over with grass; (old Anthony kept it down as long as he was able;) and though it has that cold and cheerless air which always belongs to a deserted place. It must have been built about the time of Elizabeth. The old red brick could hardly have gained that tint of mellowed ripeness in fewer years; and its massive towers, and deep stone mullions, its dark though spacious gothic windows, its heavy clusters of octagonal chimneys, all speak of the same venerable antiquity. The oaks, too, which are studded around it, though a little vexed by the neighbourhood of the sea, and seeming less pleased with the ocean breeze than the

sycamore and pinaster, which look as if they loved to combat with its blustering violence, yet evidence by their gnarled stems and rifted arms thrown wide asunder, that the perishable hand which planted them has long since passed away, and mingled with the dust of the neighbouring church-yard, to nourish perhaps into stronger luxuriance their far spreading roots. But there are living things which you might almost fancy had dwelt there as long as those old oaks which they inhabit. Often, as I have walked through that avenue in spring, watching the colonies of rooks which from time immemorial have dwelt and multiplied amongst its branches, have I noticed some staid and venerable senior of the company, of a grave and reverend aspect, who has lingered to croak forth his notes of enquiry and alarm, in the boughs which every younger bird has quitted, to soar in giddy circles far overhead; and I have pictured to myself the history of that aged denizen of the grove,

and fancied that his years, like those of the trees amongst which he dwelt, were mocking the short-lived span of the self-conceited race beneath him.

When first I came to reside at the Rectory, that house bore a far different aspect. In winter you could hardly reach its porch without hearing the merry laugh of light-hearted children as they chased their whirling hoops in emulous activity along its well kept walks ; or you met the sportsman going full of health and vigour to his day's occupation, or fell in with him as he traced his steps homeward after a hard day's walking amongst the extensive covers of St. Aubyn. Or if you went there when returning summer had spread her green mantle over nature, you would be almost certain to meet the Lady St. Aubyn on her way to the village, bearing some little comfort to one of her poor neighbours ; or, it might be, tending with admiring pleasure, the roses and carnations which garnished her

gay and fragrant parterre. Within the house, too, there was the same appearance of happy animation. In the well-stored library you might generally find Sir Henry, and often many a guest with him. It was the home of elegance and comfort: not one of those modern houses—which appear to be built upon the Chinese principle of exercising the skill of the architect, in crowding the greatest possible quantity of bricks upon the smallest possible extent of ground: nor like a grand uncarpeted show mansion, where the weary eye is urged on by the unsparing housekeeper, through an endless enfilade of cheerless chambers, strung like beads one beyond another, and untenanted save by damp and rheumatism; and family portraits frowning from the walls like so many martyrs to dyspepsia—but roomy and yet cheerful, full of elegant furniture without being crowded by it, and amply supplied with the works of art and treasures of learning which had been successively

collected by the various members of a long established and intellectual family.

It is a sad sight in its present state, to one who remembers what it was of old ; and often as I have stood and mused in the deep shadows of its projecting corners, striving to learn the lesson of decay which it proclaims, have those magnificent declarations of the prophets of Judah, which foretold the ruin of the enemies of Zion, rushed unbidden into my mind. “ From generation to generation it shall lie waste ; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it ; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it : and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.”

At the time when I first became acquainted with the family, now about forty years ago, Sir Henry St. Aubyn was little turned of five-and-forty. His lady was full twenty years younger than himself. Their whole surviving family consisted of two sons

within a year of the same age, though the light curling hair, transparent complexion, and laughing blue eye of Harry, made him appear several years younger than Arthur, whose dark complexion, and glossy raven hair, gave him the appearance of bearing more years than he had really seen. They were both lovely boys. In spite, too, of the apparent difference of feature, which struck the eye of the observer at the first glance, it was easy to trace, upon a close examination, their striking resemblance to each other. There was the same fulness of forehead, the same polished chiselling of the lower part of the face, the same curl of the upper lip, the same quickness, and yet depth of expression in the whole countenance. There was the same difference and the same resemblance in their minds. They were both free from the infection of those blighting qualities, which often impair the freshness of youth. Full of affection and simplicity, ardent, generous, and high-spirited, it

seemed as if the poisonous breath of earthly influence had never yet been breathed over them. Yet it was easy to see even thus early in their lives, that if the younger boy had the liveliest spirit, the easiest-moved affections, and the gayest tone of heart, that there was a still deeper current flowing through the soul of Arthur. They loved each other with the most perfect affection. They had never known what it was to be divided ; from the time when they had climbed together upon the same knee, they had never, in thought, in business, or in play, been for one day, or scarcely one hour, separated from each other. They were the pride and delight of their father's heart. He had married rather late in life, and his affections had been long without any peculiar object to call forth their full powers ; but with the birth of his children, it seemed as if all these hidden energies had at once started into the fullest activity ; the channels of feeling which had been dry

from childhood, were again full, even to overflowing. There had been much in his youthful years to repress the naturally strong flow of his affections. His mother had died whilst he was a mere boy, leaving, however, his young heart full of those impressions of her earnest gentle love, which returned upon him in many a cherished dream in after years. His father was a harsh, proud, impracticable man ; stern, and repulsive to his son ; cold and harsh towards all others. The peasantry of the village, who had been long accustomed to the kindness of their squires, hated and feared Sir John St. Aubyn. To such a pitch did this hatred extend, that as he grew older, the most improbable stories were commonly circulated concerning him. It became the universal impression of the village, that the appearance of such a character upon such a stock, betokened its approaching extinction. This idea was furthered by his having only one son ; and by that son re-

maining still unmarried, though he had now reached the middle years of life. There was even handed down in the village a rude stanza, which had the estimation of a prophecy, and which foretold in an ambiguous strain the approaching extinction of his line. They were said to have been uttered by an old beldam of the village, whom Sir John had treated with a degree of harshness unusual even in him. The very oak under which she stood, when, as he rode away from her after an angry interview, she poured forth her sybilline invective, has often been pointed out to me; as the words themselves have been frequently repeated under the breath of the agitated speaker. They ran as follows—

‘Through many a year this oak hath past:
But the light’ning shall rift its head at last:
Gladsome and gay is the summer’s day;
But the night shall come and its beauty decay,
And the name of St. Aubyn shall pass away.’

They obtained great currency as long as Sir Henry remained unmarried, but when he brought home with him his beautiful and

gentle bride; when the harshness of his father's deeds had been almost blotted from the memory of the villagers by the shades of death, and the continual kindness of his son; and when, above all, the ancient stock had again shot forth strong and vigorous shoots, and the nursery of St. Aubyn rung with the merry shouts of young voices, the obstinacy of rustic superstition was almost subdued, and the threatening stanza generally forgotten. Upon these two promising hopes of his family, the father's heart was fondly set; nor was the affection of their mother less intense. Lady St. Aubyn's love for her boys appeared, indeed, to pass not merely the love of women, but even the love of mothers. They were her two first-born children. Once more she had cradled in her arms the object of her tender love. Once more she had bent over her sleeping infant, and impressed a mother's kiss upon its fair and innocent brow. But not more than two years had passed over

the head of her little Ellen, before she had been taken from her. The opening bud had been transplanted into a kindlier region, where its flowers should open in an atmosphere in which storms are never known. Lady St. Aubyn, with a bleeding heart, had resigned her treasure almost joyfully into the keeping of one whose love for her surpassed, as she well knew, even that which throbbed in her own bosom. The gaiety of her natural spirit seemed mellowed rather than clouded over by a mother's sorrows; there was nothing like repining in her heart. She would often speak to me 'of her sainted child,' and reckon upon her increased store in Paradise; for though surrounded with every earthly comfort, "her treasure was in heaven." She was by no means a common character. Sprung from an ancient and honourable family, she appeared to have inherited all the refinement and true nobility of mind which had so long marked the house of which she was a daughter. She

had seen little of what are commonly called the gaieties of life. Neither poverty or fashion had yet banished for the best part of every year the family of Clare from their princely country residence. Thus the youth of Lady St. Aubyn had been spent entirely in the country, in the elegant abundance of her father's house. She had lived for her family, whose delight she was ; and for her father's tenantry, who always found in her a ready and invaluable friend. She had been remarkably destitute of religious advantages. Yet, it seemed as if the first blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, which had been imparted to her when she had been admitted into the fold of her Saviour, had never been extinguished. Sheltered from those chilling blasts of external temptation, under whose baneful power so many a promising bud is withered, she grew up to womanhood with the simplicity and affectionateness of childhood untarnished. No rude hand had swept off the fresh and beau-

tiful bloom from the sheltered fruit. Casual circumstances had led to the intercourse which at this time took place between the family of Clare and Sir Henry St. Aubyn. He saw and admired the lovely character of Ellen; and though so much older than herself, he gained her affections, which had never been trifled away in the frivolities of polished life. Regretted by many an honest heart, which still blessed her with its warmest and sincerest prayer, the Lady St. Aubyn had left her father's for her husband's home. It was there that my acquaintance with her began, and under the circumstances of affliction in which I found her when I first resided in the parish, it ripened into intimacy with unusual rapidity. The very first occasion upon which I had to read the funeral service over the open grave was, when the vault of the St. Aubyn family was opened to receive the precious remains of the little Ellen. The first visits of sympathy which I paid, were to her bereaved mother. Never

did I witness in any other instance so rapid, and yet so true a reception of the blessed doctrines of the gospel in all their fulness and freedom. Here was indeed a heart prepared by God himself for the good seed of the word. It was like sowing in the fertile soil of Egypt, as the waters of the Nile retire; when vegetation seems to start rather than grow out of the prolific soil. It was what she wanted. Never, perhaps, was there a heart more pure from external evil—never one in which there were fewer natural impediments to rejoicing in the word of Christ. And now, too, that affliction had deeply touched her—now, that for the first time she had felt the laws of natural succession interrupted—now when a mother's first tears were falling upon the bier of her beloved offspring, for whom she had borne so much, and whom she had cherished with a love which man cannot conceive; now the sound of Christ's voice, which I was the happy means of bringing

to her ears, sounded indeed to her as the sweetest music. His gracious invitations, his offered love, the words which call unto him the weary and the heavy-laden,—these things refreshed her fainting spirit; they were as the healing balm to the wounded sufferer; as the drops that water the earth, to the parched and thirsty soil. She drank in the glad tidings; she believed in the name of the Lord; the Bible became her delight. It was with the deepest thankfulness that I watched her growth in grace. There was in her that acute delicacy of conscience, and that lowly docility of mind which mark the character of those who have bowed to the yoke of Christ a neck which has never been galled and stiffened by the grossness of a life of sin. I was often humbled by the affectionate gratitude which she evinced towards me, as the instrument which it had pleased the Almighty to employ in making known to her these unsearchable riches, of which her whole soul

was full. But let it not be supposed that her family was neglected, or her habitual cheerfulness discarded upon this alteration in her feelings. Far other was its effect upon her. In the Lady St. Aubyn, religion wore a lovely and inviting appearance. She could scarcely seem more free from selfishness than she had always been, but a difference there was—a deeper tone of feeling, an intense interest in the welfare of all around her, which gave a new dignity to her character, might be discerned by an accurate observer. The wound, too, which had been opened by the hand of death, was healed as it never could have been, but by the power of religion. To one so innocent, indeed (for if any one who wears our fallen nature, may by any application of the word be called innocent, it was the Lady St. Aubyn) to one like her the grave could never wear that dark and entirely cheerless aspect with which it is invested to the worldly or profane. But those dreams of a future

meeting ; those shadowy sketches which come like the innocent visions with which our souls conversed in infancy, have not substance in them. Far other was that calm bright light which the gospel of Jesus threw around her daughter's grave—very different from this was that “hope full of immortality” on which her soul now relied ; which enabled the most affectionate of mothers, even in the early hours of affliction, to “sorrow not as those without hope,” for one who had slept in Jesus. She had now a new source of anxiety for all the objects of her affection. She watched every opening to lead her husband and her children into that path on which she had herself entered ; and which she had found to be indeed a way of pleasantness and peace. In the village, too, I had repeatedly cause to rejoice over the effects of her influence. At all times she had come as a welcome visitor to alleviate sufferings and woe ; but now her presence often

proved to be that of a good spirit calming the troubled mind ; and when I visited where she had lately knelt by the bedside of sickness and pain, I could hardly forbear fancying that there were remaining traces of the recent steps of one not much less bright and blessed than an angel minister. But I am running on into the daily occurrences of after years.

It was about two years after the death of Ellen that a distant cousin of the Lady St. Aubyn came to pay her a long visit. She was a widow—a widow indeed : for like her friend, and nearly at the same time, she had been brought by affliction into a full enjoyment of the peace which belongs to the children of God. She was accompanied by her only daughter, an engaging little girl, who had been born at nearly the same time with Ellen St. Aubyn. She soon therefore, occupied a large share in the affections of her mother's friend, and she returned them with all the freshness of early love : next to her own mother, and not far

behind her, stood the kind Lady St. Aubyn in the affections of the little Lucy. The visit of Mrs. Trovers was perpetually prolonged. She had no particular claims to call her away; and she was a welcome guest with the friend of her youth. It was indeed a happy time which they spent together; united as they were in all their feelings and pursuits; joining plans of good together, and with one accord entering upon their fulfilment. Never were my visits at the Hall more agreeable than during this season. Guests of the highest order of intellect were frequent visitors there; and in their company the Lady St. Aubyn imparted and received the most refined pleasure. But she was as cheerful and as happy with her common country neighbours. Intimations of the feelings of uncongenial dulness seemed conveyed by some secret channel at her receptions, as rapidly as if her keen eye had long been exercised in watching the habits of the animal.

But I must not linger on these pleasant days upon which my mind loves to dwell. In one of their charitable excursions, Mrs. Travers caught a violent cold; no anxiety was entertained upon her account, until it had for some weeks defied the usually-approved remedies. Medical aid was then called in. The report of the physician created rather than dispelled alarm. There was but too much reason for it. It frequently happens, that an unusual delicacy of organization is connected with the exquisite sensibility of spirit, which was so remarkable in Mrs. Travers. With her it certainly was so. Life was already struggling in her with a feeble flame; and after a short attack of sharp illness, during which every grace which had been seen in health, shone out with increased lustre, as she drew nearer and nearer to the centre of light, she peacefully breathed her last with her head pillowed upon the bosom of her friend. She left her orphan child to the guardianship of

a second mother ; and deeply did the Lady St. Aubyn vow, that she would be indeed a mother to the unprotected little one, whose convulsive sobs she was endeavouring to assuage, as she folded her closely to her bosom. ‘ But shall I never see mamma again ? oh you won’t, you won’t take me from her ; mamma, mamma, why don’t you answer me ? open your eyes once more—just once,’ cried the poor child, in the pauses of a flood of tears.

But those calm and beautiful eyes were now closed, not to open even to her child’s cry of agony. With the fondest and most judicious tenderness, did the Lady St. Aubyn still the sorrows of that young heart, which seemed at first bursting with the grief to which she was so unaccustomed ; gently and by degrees did she carry the eyes of Lucy over the dark vale of death, to that bright land which her own faith beheld so clearly, and in a tone which had never deceived the child, she promised that she should see her

mother again, and endeavoured to open to her youthful comprehension, the glories of that re-union. From that day forth, she was more closely grafted than ever into the affections of her adopted mother. For most truly had the little Lucy become unto her as a daughter.

Time passed on, and from the eyes of Lucy every tear was dried away. She began to utter the name 'mamma,' when addressing the Lady St. A. without hesitation, and without a momentary tinge of sadness hanging over her happy countenance. She rejoiced in her two youthful companions: brothers as she termed them; and knew no difference in her affections between the merry gaiety of Harry, or the quieter, but not less earnest love of Arthur. Oh! blessed age of childhood, when the soul is fresh from the hands of its creator; when in the dewy brightness of the morning of life, the day is too short for perpetual enjoyment and innocent laughter, in which an

angel would scarce think scorn of joining ; yet who has not seen these sunshine moments clouded over by those, who, in true wisdom, should rather seek to minister to the spotless enjoyment. There were no such mistaken rules of education laid down in the nursery of St. Aubyn. The spring of the spirit was never broken there ; nor their youth instructed in the arts of fraud, by forcing them to throw round harmless pleasures the hedge of concealment. Lady St. Aubyn was the companion of their sports, the sharer of their secrets, the aider of all their plans of pleasure, as well as the tender mother, pointing the young eye, and raising the untutored voice towards heaven.

Her great endeavour was to win them into the ways of holiness, not to terrify them from what was wrong. It was their best reward, to hear her talk to them of heaven, to hear of that bright world of light, where all who loved the Saviour, lived in joy and blessedness ; to be told of him who

had made them, and redeemed them, and who yearned over them with an exceeding great love.

Years passed on, and no circumstances of great moment happened to the family. The change from childhood to boyhood was so gradual that it was scarcely noticed, until the necessity of an altered mode of education impressed it on the parents of the young St. Aubyns.

The earnest desire of their mother was, that they should be spared that early exposure to the world which must be the consequence of sending them to a public school. Does not nature teach us, she would say, not to transplant the tender plant too soon into the full exposure of the winds and storms? Do not the very weaknesses of body, which need such continual care, teach us that the mind, too, is as yet unstrengthened by virtuous habits, and that it is unfitted to stand alone by its own firmness, against the shocks of promiscuous society. But all her

reasoning failed to convince Sir Henry. He was indeed a most affectionate husband, a most careful and indulgent father. His disposition was naturally amiable. His early habits had taught him self-denial, and his polished manner was a faithful index of a refined mind. But with all these amiable and engaging qualities in the composition of his character, there was evidently wanting that renewal unto righteousness which shone forth so eminently in his lady. Her prayers and endeavours on his behalf were never intermitted ; but though the partiality of her dutiful affection led her to hope that she could trace within him the beginnings of spiritual life, it was but too evident to other eyes that as yet at least they were entirely wanting. Thus, at this very time, all his calculations for the welfare of his sons were made, without his once taking into account their eternal interests. He was perfectly decided upon the place of their destination ; and when once their mother

knew that her husband's determination was complete, she acquiesced in it with her usual ready deference to his fixed opinion, and only sought to prepare her sons as far as lay within her power, for their approaching trial. Their anticipations of school marked strongly the difference of their character. The natural gaiety of Henry led him to look forward with unmixed gratification to the change which they were about to experience. He never anticipated sorrow—he always expected pleasure; and if he thus escaped many hours of sadness, yet it often happened that he was altogether unprepared for difficulty or evil when it came; and was therefore altogether unready to meet it. Thus in this very instance he thought only of the delight of having so many companions, of the bustle of the departure, of the joy of the return. Besides, as Arthur would be with him, he scarcely realized the thought of leaving home, so large a portion of it was to accompany him still. With Arthur,

on the contrary, the expectation of leaving his father's house was a serious matter. He spoke little about it, but he thought and felt much. He had already gone over in his mind the pain of quitting the scenes of all his early happiness—of losing the gladdening sight of his mother's smile—of hearing strange voices in the stead of the welcome sound of his father's call, or the innocent prattle of his darling Lucy. Harry loved all of these as much as he did, but he did not expect to lose them, when in truth they could not continue. Thus when the time of trial came, the difference between them was not lessened. While Harry sobbed upon his mother's neck, Arthur seemed less inclined to sadness than he had often been of late. The reality of parting, painful as it was, could not realize his previous anticipations. So, too, when the pain of parting was over, and the bustle of the journey had again stirred up the happy gaiety of Harry's natural disposition, it seemed again as if

there was nothing in the world to sadden him. His anxious expectations of the new world upon which he was about to enter, kept his mind fully upon the stretch; and his sunshine fancy invested with the glow of pleasure all the indistinct features of the distant prospect.

‘How many boys will there be, Arthur—I wonder whether many of them will be older than we are?’ and then followed speculations upon their proficiency in various favourite sports, and even in their studies too; and it seemed wonderful to Arthur, as he, too, silently looked forward to their new life, that Harry’s grief should have been so soon forgotten, and that he should now be able to build these castles of hope with such inexhaustible materials of unclouded gaiety.

When, however, they reached the place of their destination, and the reality of school was presented to them, Harry could scarcely endure the sufferings which were hardly noticed by his brother. The rudeness of

some—the unkindness of others—the estrangedness of all—the new and entire want of all those demonstrations of affection with which the very atmosphere of St. Aubyn now appeared to have been loaded; the loneliness of a crowd of strangers; all these things pressed so painfully upon the sensitive spirit of the light-hearted boy, that he seemed to shrink like the long-cherished exotic from the blast of winter; and had not his brother been there, firm, independent, and full of resources for both of them, he would hardly have borne his first transplanting from the shelter of home to the exposure of a public school. In time, however, all these feelings were overcome; and the hearty laugh of the lately miserable boy testified that his lively spirit had again adapted itself to his altered circumstances. As he grew up, this peculiarity of disposition was in some degree mitigated, but still it remained sufficiently apparent to form the ground of much anxiety to his clear-sighted mother. It was

the subject of many a conversation between her and myself. For in religious matters the same character was evident. His *feelings* were readily excited, and under their controul he might have been, from time to time, hurried even to extravagance of self-devotion. But it was an uncalculating unsteady tumult of sensations, which gave but little promise of subsiding into the regular flow of true devotedness of heart to God. He seemed, perhaps, one day to have made extraordinary progress in his course, but sad experience had taught me to feel no assurance that a hurricane from the opposite quarter of the heavens might not as suddenly drive his ungoverned vessel even further back than it had been before. I had far more hope for his brother. His temptations were all of a different nature. Slow to express his deepest feelings, yet evidencing to an observant eye that there were passions in his soul of even stronger power than those which exerted

such evident controul over Harry; he could not turn out eventually an ordinary character. There were, it was plain, many strivings of the blessed Spirit in his soul, but we could not as yet feel any confident hope that the power of this world was subdued within him. He might yet give himself entirely to any worldly occupation; and whether it were ambition or any lighter passion, it was evident that his digression from the truth would, if once begun, be even greater than that of his more mutable brother.

Their conduct at school was upon the whole very satisfactory. Their talents were of a high order, and their increasing developement shewed that they were not left unemployed. Arthur was the more habitually studious; but Harry carried difficulties by assault, which his brother overcame by more regularity of attack. It would be difficult to say which was the most popular amongst his schoolfellows. High spirits,

fine feelings, perfect good temper, and a remarkable freedom from selfishness, secured to them the affections of all around them. Perhaps Arthur was the most deeply, and Harry the most universally beloved. Their mutual affection was unequalled. It seemed as if they had every feeling in common ; and the careful watchfulness of Arthur's love was repaid by the enthusiastic admiration of his brother. Many were the occasions on which this fore-thought was the means of saving his more light-minded brother from the difficulties in which he would have involved himself. On one occasion the spirit of insubordination had spread pretty generally through the ranks of the young republic. An open act of rebellion was planned ; the eyes of all the ringleaders were fixed upon the St. Aubyns. If they could be won over, the success of the plot was deemed certain. Their standing in the school, their talents and their character, would decide so many waverers, and give to the whole band

of conspirators such an appearance of importance, that they promised themselves the most unbounded victory over their reluctant masters. They dared not, however, propose the plan to Arthur. There was a keen-sightedness about him, from which they involuntarily shrank. With Harry there was less difficulty. Some of his chief favourites were employed to gain him to their views. Stories of oppression were magnified; his pity for the younger lads who were represented as its victims was easily excited. The plan was gradually opened to him; its certain success predicted; its glorious result enforced. All Harry's feelings were excited; and he was upon the very point of pledging himself to the insurgent party, when he recollected that he had not yet consulted Arthur, and that he could not act in it without him. It was in vain to endeavour to get him to promise.

‘Oh! but Arthur will be afraid of joining in it.’

‘ Arthur *afraid* !—when was he ever afraid of anything ? ’

‘ Why should you ask him before you promise ? ’

‘ I will go this minute and tell him every thing, and see if he does not soon come back with me. ’

But when Arthur heard it all from his impetuous brother, he did not fire up as Harry had expected. So far from it, he had something to answer to every thing which had wrought upon the feelings of the less reflecting boy. The tales of oppression were so exaggerated as to be untrue ; the motives which led the discontented to insubordination were altogether unworthy ; the failure of the plan was certain ; disgrace must overtake its actors ; ‘ and how,’ said Arthur, ‘ how could you bear to come home to St. Aubyn, as we have never yet returned, with shame instead of joy in our hearts ? ’

Harry was soon convinced, but though

Arthur did return with him, and endeavour to persuade the others to relinquish their rash attempt, he was not so successful there. Harry found it rather difficult to bear the taunts to which his own volatility exposed him ; he was however firm, for Arthur was with him to give him confidence. The rebellion was not prevented by this failure ; but as Arthur had foreseen, it was immediately crushed, and brought disgrace and punishment upon all concerned in it, and a shameful expulsion upon all who had joined in it from that class in the school which was occupied by Harry St. Aubyn. His gratitude to his brother was unbounded ; and the delight of his next return home was magnified almost to extacy by the sense of what he had escaped. Notwithstanding the well-founded anxiety of the Lady St. Aubyn, great was her joy at every return of her sons, to find them so entirely free from many evils which her jealous affection had led her to fear for them.

They were now growing out of boyhood, but the simplicity of their tastes, and their increased affection for St. Aubyn, if it was indeed capable of increase, proved that they were free from that touch of vice which so certainly debases and vitiates the simplicity of domestic affection. They still returned to their father's company with the same gleeful hilarity as they had done when the two new ponies had been first provided for his youthful comrades. They still loved that full familiar confidence with herself which it was their mother's delight to encourage, as much as when they had nothing more to entrust to her affection than the hopes and anxieties and joys of the merest boyhood. They both of them met Lucy Travers with the same open-hearted love with which they had greeted her when the affection of childhood had united them together. They set out as eagerly to examine the progress of a new plantation, to enjoy some beloved haunt of childhood, to see some improve-

ment in the grounds, or to visit some old favourites amongst the rejoicing villagers, as they had done at their first return from school to see the flowers in their little gardens which Lucy had been keeping for them, to feed her tame pigeons, or to sup on the fresh-gathered strawberries and delicious cream, which it was the joy of Mrs. White's heart to lavish upon the 'dear children,' whom she had attended of old in the nursery of St. Aubyn.

But though she was truly thankful for this undoubted evidence of their comparative innocence, she was not free from the full weight of a mother's anxiety. In the character of each of the two fine-spirited young men whom every one admired and loved, she saw infinite capabilities of good or evil; and how could she but watch over them with the deepest and most overwhelming solicitude. There was one plan which she had long cherished. It had been even from the infancy of Lucy Travers, the

dream of promise which the Lady St. Aubyn indulged, that she should one day see her wedded to her own Arthur ; and as years passed on, and Lucy gathered with them fresh and increasing loveliness ; and as her character opened continually, and grew in every feature which could endear her to her adopted mother, it became more and more that mother's earnest wish to possess a still truer title to that long-accustomed name. Often did she speak to me upon the subject, and express an earnest hope that she was not fixing her heart with sinful fondness upon this darling scheme. She prayed that it might so be ordered, if her heavenly Father saw that it were fitting, but she failed not to ask for grace to submit her will to His, whatever he saw fit to appoint.

It was not till the two brothers had spent their first year at the university, that any thing passed upon the subject, between the Lady St. Aubyn and her son. They had

been spending the first part of the long vacation at home, and were about to join a reading party in a distant part of the country, when their departure was delayed by the illness of their mother. It rapidly increased, and in a very short time threatened a fatal termination. Harry's watch by his mother's sick bed, had been relieved by Lucy, and it was the turn of Arthur to attend upon her. As he entered the room, with the softened tread which speaks at once of sickness and sorrow to the soul of those who hear it, he heard the faint tones of his mother's voice, endeavouring to comfort Lucy, who was evidently stifling sobs which almost broke her heart. 'My Lucy, it will not bring our parting nearer, to speak of what may happen. You see how weak I am already grown, and you heard the opinion which Dr. A. yesterday gave us. I would have you prepared, my love. Think then of what I have said to you, and write to your aunt upon the subject; and now

dear girl kiss, me, for I am faint with speaking.'

As Arthur came to the side of his mother's bed, he thought that he had never before admired the beauty of Lucy Travers as it deserved to be admired. Her face was flushed with agitation, while a big tear was rising under the long black lashes which fringed each of her bright and beautiful eyes. Her hair had fallen over her face, as she stooped over the Lady St. Aubyn, to fan her faint and languid forehead. She did not notice Arthur till he stood beside her, and it was some minutes before his mother was sufficiently restored, to be left entirely to his care. She sunk, however, into sleep, and Lucy left the room. Arthur seated himself in the chair beside his mother's bed, and as he gazed upon her pale countenance, and listened to her laborious breathing, he felt his heart swelling beyond the power of that customary controul which he was wont to exert over it. Not one of

the few words which he had overheard, was without its full meaning to him, and the thought of that happy place deserted of its two endearments, without Lucy or his mother, completely overcame him. His face was supported on his hand as he mused upon the future, which was gathering in thick shades around him. While he was sitting in this turmoil of imagination, his mother had awoke refreshed by her short sleep, and was anxiously watching the workings of her son's countenance. The whisper of his name recalled him at once to self-possession, but the Lady St. Aubyn had seen too much to be able to remain silent. She drew him into conversation. There was no concealment about him, though there was much of that species of reserve which is the necessary consequence of deep internal feelings; she soon learned that he had overheard the close of her last conversation, and it was not very long before she had gathered from him too, what his constant habit of

self-reflection had already taught him, that he loved Lucy Travers with a passionate fondness. The Lady St. Aubyn doubted not of the affection of her adopted daughter for him. She had seen many things in the course of her constant intercourse with Lucy, which persuaded her, that though unsuspected by herself, her heart was given up to Arthur, and this had added not a little to the anxiety which she had long felt concerning the matter. He was not so ready to believe it, but after some time spent in conversation with his mother, and a full feeling of the necessity of his forcing himself to make the effort, he sought out Lucy, to learn whether her own lips confirmed his mother's opinion. It was not many hours afterwards before the Lady St. Aubyn joined their hands together, and with a short but fervent prayer for the happiness of two almost equally beloved by her, gave them her fondest blessing. It had seemed in the morning, as if she had not strength

remaining for any such exertion; yet it was difficult to believe, when I saw her in the evening, and the fatigue necessarily consequent upon such excitement was a little passed, that she had not really rallied. There was an expression of calm thankfulness settled upon her features, which at once told me how entirely she had recognized in this, as in every other circumstance, the hand of a Heavenly Father—and this indeed was the temper of her mind: she believed that her death was near at hand, and she saw a new instance of the goodness which had long followed her, in the removal of this weight of anxiety from her spirits. In one thing, however, she was mistaken; she was not so near her eternal reward as she believed herself to be. From this very time the violence of the attack diminished, and after a long and weakening continuance of abated symptoms she was restored to the love and thankful rejoicings of her family. When she watched Lucy and her

son sitting side by side, or walking together as of old, but with new, and tenderer, and more sacred sympathy than ever, she felt that her sickness with all its pains, had been a cheap purchase for the happiness she reaped from their engagement.

But though Lady St. Aubyn's health was sufficiently restored to allow her sons to leave home with comfort, yet I plainly saw that it had left her with a shattered constitution. The flame indeed had burnt up again, when it seemed about to be extinguished; perhaps it was as bright as ever, but there was something about it which impressed me with the belief that it would be short-lived. My fears were too soon verified. It was not long before a new and more dangerous return of the same disorder gathered the family of Lady St. Aubyn around her sick bed. Her illness was painful in the extreme, and it was evidently rapidly breaking down her little remaining strength. There was, however, time enough given to her to shew

the blessed triumph of grace, over pain and approaching dissolution. She felt the rock that was under her, and with a calm and settled hope she entered upon the first shades of the dark valley of the shadow of death. Many were her prayers for those she left behind, and earnest the entreaties she addressed to them, to fix their hope where her's was established, so that even this hour could not remove it. Again she blessed her son and daughter, and expressed her joyful approbation of their union ; but even then did she warn them, never in their brightest moments, to forget that the hour must come, when every earthly joy, even the purest earthly affection, would be insufficient for the soul's support ; and while she rejoiced in their mutual love, she warned them of the curses of idolatry. Her end was perfect peace. Even those around her bed, hardly knew when she breathed her last ; so peacefully did she resign her spirit into the keeping of her God. The tempest

of Harry's grief, when the full sense of his loss burst upon him, was perfectly frightful. He had never ceased to believe that she would be again restored to health ; and the reality, therefore, of her being gone for ever from him here, broke upon him like a peal of thunder. In vain did Lucy and his brother endeavour to soothe and quiet him. His soul refused comfort. He clung to the lifeless form of her whom he had so long and so fondly loved. At last I myself persuaded him to quit the chamber, and left him, as I hoped, somewhat calmer in his own room ; but as soon as he was alone, grief again overmastered him, and he rushed in an agony of sorrow into his mother's room, and casting himself by the side of the bed, with his arms over her lifeless body, sobbed like a child. It was long before he was in any degree quieted, and when, with all the soothing and holy rites of christian burial, we had just deposited her earthly remains beside those of her infant daughter,

he seemed completely maddened by the force with which he had repressed his feelings, and flinging himself upon the coffin, he clung passionately to it, and was at last removed from it by force, and carried to his room, which he did not leave again for many weeks : a violent attack of fever followed this intense excitement, and it was long before he was fully convalescent.

The house of St. Aubyn could never be again to me, what it had used to be. Yet after a while, happiness seemed again to have settled there. Sir Henry was arrived at that age, when the wounds of the affections are never deep enough to refuse to be healed. Arthur could not but be happy with Lucy Travers at his side ; and even the spring of Harry's spirits seemed fully restored ; and often when I have seen the three together, I have asked myself, whether they could be those whom I so well remembered to have seen struggle with such

overpowering sorrow. The time of their leaving the university was come, and Arthur had begun to press Lucy to fix the time when his long-cherished hopes should be fulfilled.

CHAPTER II.

IT had been my constant endeavour to fix upon the family of St. Aubyn, the impressions of good, which the striking scene of holy resignation we had all witnessed, had not failed to excite. In the character of Lucy's religious feelings, I trusted that there was much evidence of decided improvement. In Arthur, too, there appeared to be an increased seriousness of mind. But Harry exhibited no trace of those sensations which had excited for the time such frightful power over his whole nature. The hurricane had swept over the landscape; it had uprooted every thing before, and left desolation behind it; but the scene was clothed again with its former

beauty, and not a mark of the ravage of the tempest lingered upon the face of nature. It had marred the form of buildings which had defied its full power; but these still retained some evidence of its violence. The willow had yielded even to the ground, but it had regained its former posture. The firmer trees of the forest resisted its first fury, but bore still the impress of its might. Harry was just what he had been before, as high-spirited, as hopeful, as fearless of evil, and also as ill-prepared to meet it.

After due delays and decent procrastination,—after calling in the matronly countenance of an almost unknown aunt, her only surviving relative, a widowed sister of her father's, who had recently returned from India, the different preparations were all completed, and the day named for the marriage of Lucy Travers to the heir of the house of St. Aubyn. Universal was the joy demonstrated upon this occasion. The

merits of Lucy were so highly appreciated both in the family of St. Aubyn and throughout the whole village of B——, that many a heart rejoiced in the prospect of her settled continuance amongst them. Indeed the pleasure which it excited seemed to be universal. Sir Harry was as fond a father to the bride, as to those whom by a more proper title he called his children. Arthur's joy was deep and earnest, and Harry was full of his usual animated spirits, and rejoicing expectations. Yet as the time drew near for the celebration of the wedding, I could not help perceiving an unusual thoughtfulness in Arthur's manner. It seemed as if he had something pressing upon his mind, and once or twice I thought that he was forcing himself to enter upon the subject with me; but either he could not bring himself to begin, or something interrupted us, and diverted his attention. It was the very day before that, which was fixed for the wedding, on which he first

broke through his reluctance to enter upon the subject. 'I have known too long, my dear Sir, your kindness, and felt too deeply your affection in many trying situations, to have a doubt of your efficient friendship now.' I assured him of my desire to assist him. 'You know,' he continued, 'something of Harry's character. You know something too of our affection for each other. It is concerning him that I wish to speak to you; and when you hear what it is that I have to say, you will not be surprized at the length of time through which I have been struggling to force myself to openness with you. I am convinced that he loves Lucy, that he loves her in his own way as fondly as I do. She has not a conception of it. For quick-sighted as women are to affection, here she thinks that it is nothing more than the love of a brother. The very same cause has hidden from him the true state of his affections; and he is as yet entirely ignorant of what he is about to endure. But the truth has

not escaped my observation, and I dread the struggle of his feelings when first he knows it. You remember his violence once before. Picture to yourself what will be his feelings when Lucy is gone—when he knows that she is another's wife—when he is left at St. Aubyn alone, with not even a brother's arm to lean upon. Oh! Sir, I have seen Harry strangely wrought upon by small events; I have watched the suddenness, and the awfulness of the change which passes over his mind, and I tremble for the result. Our whole souls are now united, and mine bleeds for him. If I were the cause of bringing any evil upon him, I could not survive the bitterness with which it would overflow my soul. Day after day have I thought over this matter, brooded over it secretly, and never seen any escape. To postpone our marriage, would be but to strengthen the chains against which he will have to struggle, to narrow the cell against the walls of which I

fear his convulsive bursts may dash his head.'

How did I admire the noble affection, the manly forethought which that morning's conversation exhibited in Arthur St. Aubyn. His [fondness for his brother was gentle as woman's love. He had ever been used to think for him—in childhood, at school, at college; in the exuberance of joy, or in the depression of sorrow, it was upon his arm that his brother had leaned, and had never failed to find support: and now when most he needed its assistance, was it to be suddenly removed; nay, was it, as it were, to be uplifted to strike the very blow under which that brother would writhe in unsupported agony. There was no satisfactory solution for the difficulty; and while admiring the courageous and disinterested affection of the young man, I could not but be deeply grieved to perceive how bitter a dash of sorrow was hereby thrown into his cup of happiness. All that he could sug-

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gest, (and that I readily promised) was, that I should keep as much as possible with Harry, when left by Arthur and his bride, that I should watch him carefully, and be prepared to meet whatever circumstances might hereafter arise. We parted, not without an earnest prayer for strength for him, to whom we deemed it so essential, and for a blessing upon the approaching fulfilment of his beloved mother's perhaps too anxious wishes.

The wedding morning was what such a day should be; all nature seemed to have put on her gayest and most rejoicing aspect—birds and insects, trees and flowers, were all animated with unusual life, or invested with unwonted beauty. Many was the hearty prayer of the villagers who thronged the church on that happy morning. Many the chaplet of flowers, and the wishes of happiness which were showered upon the bride and bridegroom as they passed under the church tower, which was ringing forth

its loud and merry joy to the echoes of St. Aubyn; and rousing the noisy inhabitants of the ancient oaks, to emulous vociferation. At mid-day the band of tenantry crowded the hospitable table of the Hall, and taking example from its honoured lord, rejoiced with all their hearts upon this day of merriment. It was a holiday through the village, and it closed as it had begun, in cheerfulness. So pleasant an aspect did all things wear, that though the evening sky was blackened by a thunder-storm,—and though “the fated oak” as it had been named of old, was struck and blasted by the lightning, there was scarcely one to be found throughout the whole village whose superstition was proof against the rejoicing appearance of the times; or who from such a beginning, could augur anything of ill to the young representatives of the St. Aubyn family. But amidst this universal scene of gaiety and happiness, there were two hearts full of anxiety. Even his own

rejoicing exultation could not banish from Arthur's mind his gloomy and increasing apprehensions. His last words to me, breathed in an under tone before he drove off from the Hall, were, ' You will not forget my brother,' and they were accompanied with an earnest grasp of the hand, which spoke of powerful, though repressed agitation. With an anxious heart I set about the fulfilment of my promise. For a while the busy merriment of Harry's soul seemed unabated. The villagers were to be entertained; the cricket matches arranged; and Harry was full of occupation, and full apparently of glee. Yet, even then I began to be alarmed, for I thought I could perceive an unnatural activity taking the place of his ordinary gaiety—it was beginning to wear the appearance of effort, as if he himself dreaded its intermission—he seemed to soar on, and on, to a giddier height, but not, I thought, so much from native strength of wing as from the desperate energy of a wounded

spirit. There was also at times a peculiar wildness about his eyes ; a sort of uneasy glare, as if he knew not where to fix them. I had peculiarly noticed this same expression of countenance when I had attended him after his mother's death. It had then made me fear for the continuance of his reason, and it was too deeply imprinted upon my recollection to be ever afterwards effaced. As the evening closed, and the guests one by one drove off, as the sounds of song and music ceased ; and the silence of the home party was contrasted with the buzz of voices and gaiety of appearance with which the room had been recently animated, the restless uneasiness of Harry's manner seemed rapidly to increase. I readily acquiesced in Sir Henry's proposal that I should defer my return home till the morning ; and as he retired early, I was soon left alone with Harry. I endeavoured to engage him in conversation, but in spite of all my efforts it visibly flagged. He was per-

petually absent ; and seemed to start when I spoke to him again, as if he were roused from a painful dream. Once, almost in hopelessness, I turned the conversation to the bridal pair—he seemed quite to wince under the pain of being compelled to speak of them—and I saw that it was better to forbear that subject. At last though sorely unwilling to part from him, and leave him to himself, I was compelled to do so. There was no excuse for keeping him up any longer, and with a heavy heart I withdrew to my own room to pray for the unhappy object of my solicitude. ‘ Alas ! ’ I said to myself, ‘ how poor a thing is the fairest superstructure when the foundation is unstable ? How many talents, and acquirements, and sensibility, and affection, and all that is lovely in man, how may it all fail in the day of trial, if there be not a true fear of God upon which all these are founded. The blanched and filling sails, whose beauty we admire, are the very things which make

the storm destructive to the unballasted vessel.' I knew not then how soon or how fatally my anticipations of evil were about to be fulfilled.

Anxiety concerning Harry made me an early riser upon the morning of the day which followed the wedding. I had scarcely entered the saloon before I met old Anthony White, who with a mournful air told me that Mr. Harry was very ill. 'I suppose he was overdone yesterday, sir, for some of our people who sleep near his room, say that he passed a very rough night; they heard him walking up and down his room, and talking to himself just as he used to do after our good mistress died. They were thinking of getting up and going to him, but just then he seemed quiet and they hoped he was gone to bed; and so after listening a while longer they fell asleep. But early this morning they were woke up by him again; and at last they called me up, and I made bold to go into his room. He had not

been in bed once all night, sir, and I do not think he very well knew what he was about. His eyes were so red, and glared so, and at first he was quite angry with me for coming into his room. So I slipped out, sir, and sent John off for the doctor; he has been here about half an hour, and has not left this yet.

I waited with increased alarm to see the medical man, and receive his report. He soon left the chamber of the sick man. He had found him in a high fever, with a determination of blood to the head, which would have threatened dangerous results if it had not been taken in such good time. 'He is now much quieter: has promised me to go immediately to bed, for which Anthony is helping to prepare him, and must be kept perfectly quiet. It is the effect, I have no doubt,' he continued, 'of yesterday's excitement; how strange it is that joy and sorrow should produce the same effects; there are much the same symptoms in this

case as Mr. St. Aubyn experienced after the death of his mother.'

I did not think it necessary to undeceive Mr. Walters as to the cause of Harry's present attack, though I had little doubt that it was not to joy to which it ought to be attributed. We sat down to a melancholy breakfast. Sir Henry had not seen his son, as he had just been left asleep, and to keep him perfectly quiet was known to be of the very first moment. His sleep, however, was very short, breakfast was scarcely over when old Anthony called me out as if on business of my own, but to tell me, in truth, that he was alarmed about Mr. Harry. He had woke up from sleep, and seemed to be again wandering in his head; he talked incessantly, and it was difficult to catch the meaning of any thing that he said. I went immediately to his room, and seated myself beside him. He did not know me, but taking me for his brother, addressed me with great joy.—' I

am so glad to see you back again, Arthur; I had such a night last night, I thought that you had left me; and my mother, she was gone too; and Lucy, Lucy, was gone—gone—gone, never to come back again.’—He stopped for a moment suddenly, and staring in my face, with a wild unmeaning sort of gaze, he said, ‘ Brother, where is Lucy? Why does not she come? Have you killed her? Why do they say I shall never see her again? Have not we both loved her, ever since we could speak? O Arthur, Arthur, is it come to this!’ He continued talking incessantly in something of this strain, but so quickly and incoherently, that it was difficult to understand him. For this I was very thankful; as I trusted that it would prevent the real cause of his distress becoming generally known. The medical man who had been sent for on the first return of alarming symptoms was soon with us, and evidently took an apprehensive view of the

case. There was every appearance of a violent access of brain fever, and the extreme irritability of system which every symptom manifested rendered its issue very doubtful. I had promised to send Arthur an account by that day's post of his brother's state, but fearing that the ordinary conveyance might be too slow, an express was sent off to hurry the mournful return of those who had so lately quitted us with every mark of joy. The next morning brought them home; and Arthur flew at once to his brother's room. He was not recognized by Harry. In vain did he speak to him, and endeavour by that well-known voice to call up the associations of childhood, and charm to rest the storms which were sweeping over his soul. The murmured complaints, the hurried questions of his brother shewed him with painful certainty upon what his mind was morbidly brooding. 'Gone! she is gone for ever!' 'Gone to the grave—gone to my mother—no, no! Arthur took her—Arthur! Arthur!'

and then after straining his eyes and seeming to dilate every muscle of his fine countenance, in a speechless agony of intense excitement, he would sink feebly back upon the pillow, whence nothing could raise him until his strength, and with it his violence, seemed to be recruited for fresh exertion.

Arthur determined to try in one of these pauses what would be the effect of introducing Lucy into his presence. As we anxiously watched his countenance, we indulged a moment's hope that her appearance was likely to exercise a beneficial influence over him. He looked eagerly at her—then his expression changed to one of something very like composure; but it was quickly followed by the languor which it had for an instant removed, and then his eye followed her drowsily about the room, without recognition and without meaning.

Oh! with what fearful suddenness had the house of joy been turned into the house of weeping! Poor Sir Henry was bowed

to the very earth, Lucy was utterly overwhelmed, and Arthur's heart was ready to burst. It was impossible to prevent his attributing his brother's sickness to himself, his misery to his own happiness; and he looked at himself as little better than the destroyer of one with whom from very infancy his own life had been bound up. This painful scene had lasted for three days, when it was closed by one still more overwhelming. Sir Henry had taken my arm to leave the sick chamber, he had just with the utmost difficulty persuaded Arthur, who could never be brought to quit by day or night his brother's bed, to go into the park for half an hour, while the nurse watched by Harry's side. He was more quiet than usual—he had sunk into a sort of doze—and this had of late generally lasted about half an hour. We had not, however, left the room for above five minutes, when a violent shriek hurried us back again. The tale of agony was soon told. While the nurse had been

for a moment at the door, the delirious man had sprung from the bed,—an effort which he had never before attempted,—rushed to the window, pushed it up, and before the least interruption was possible, had thrown himself headlong from it. The fall was certain death; and Arthur, who was almost below the room, was the first to throw himself upon the crushed and disfigured form in which life had lately dwelt with such energy and power.

No language can describe that hour—those days of agony. The hopeless, nerveless, dejected sufferings of the old father—the pale wasting misery of Lucy—or the deep compressed agony of Arthur. But bitter as was this affliction, it was, I believe, a precious seed-time to his soul. Thoroughly and for ever was he weaned from earthly things, and when, as we did repeatedly, we bowed our knees together in prayer, with what an eagerness of aspiration did he ask for spiritual grace! How earnestly did he

pray for pardon for the many times wherein he had resisted the gracious purposes of God ; and turned his merciful dealings into occasions of iniquity. 'Oh !' said he, 'that I could pray for the dead too. I would live for centuries even in this misery of mind, could I but spend them in prayer for him who is taken away ; but it must not be.' The very reserve which had always marked his character was thrown aside towards myself ; and now that the curtain was withdrawn from it, I was astonished at the deep workings of soul which were manifested to me. I trembled for him ; for I greatly feared that these exhausting throes of his active spirit would prove too powerful for the bodily frame wherein it was enshrined. My fears were not groundless. He was evidently worn out before the day came for committing to the earth the body of his beloved brother. He would, however, be present with us. His fine features, pale as the driven snow, were firmly fixed by the

force which he exerted over them: not a single tear—not one stifled sob—not one groan escaped from him. Nor did his eye refuse to search out the dark and uncertain extent of the St. Aubyn vault, which had been opened last to receive the mother of him who was now borne there in the spring of life, or rather in the early prime of manhood. He turned away when the service was concluded, with the same composed air which he had preserved during its continuance; but I could plainly see how violent was the struggle, and I could in some degree imagine how severe must be the price which nature would exact from him, for this stifling of her fiercest eruptions. I returned with him to the Hall, and spent much of the remainder of the day with him and Lucy. He still maintained for the most part the same composure of appearance which had marked him at his brother's grave; but it was most evident that the bolt had stricken his heart. The

dejection of his spirits rather increased, and his health, which had never been robust, began to fail. Symptoms of that same insidious complaint which had carried off his mother, made their alarming appearance. The hectic flush, lighting up with its sudden glow his pale and withered features, like the red gleam of sunshine which escapes from the edge of the thunder-cloud, and sheds a glaring and yet darkened light over nature ; the feverish night, and all the other harrowing accompaniments of consumption, (imprinted, alas ! with deep and melancholy distinctness by some home scene, upon the memory of almost all,) were soon noticed by every one around him. It was indeed an affecting sight to witness the bridal employments of Lucy ; to see the devotedness of her affection, as she watched over his sinking health. He loved her with the fondest affection, and her tenderness soothed and refreshed his wounded spirit, but its effect was only that of the

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balmy breath of spring upon the frame in which death has already fixed his dart. It plays around the temples—it refreshes—it promises to invigorate the sufferer, but it cannot reach the seat of the disease. ‘It seems,’ he would say, ‘as if there were a sort of secret sympathy between us, and it cannot be long before I am laid beside him. My poor Lucy, thy bridal days have been indeed darkened,’ and as he gazed upon her, he saw the tear which she in vain struggled to repress, start into her beautiful eyes, and fall hastily down. He tried to cheer her. He spoke of the probable effect of the next spring upon his health, and she caught at the treacherous hope, and reposed for a moment in his words. But it was a moment’s hope dearly purchased; for it is in the pauses of sorrow, when the eye has been for a little while turned away from its steady gaze upon its misery, that the full overflowing sense of agony rushes like an ice-bolt upon the soul. There is nothing in

affliction like the first wakening sensation, when, after an indistinct sense for an instant of the unseen presence of some heart-rending remembrance, it comes home to the sickening spirit in its terrible reality. But it was not thus that he usually soothed her sorrow. His soul was daily opening to the blessed realities of the gospel of peace. He drank deeply of those healing streams, and he could point the weeping eye of his wife to that calm and peaceful hope which was already gladdening his broken spirit. Never did I witness the end of one who was so speedily ripened into an unusual fitness for the presence of his Lord. The depth of his humility, the strength and simplicity of his faith, the chastened glow and holy fervour of his spiritual affections was such, as I never witnessed in any one else. The power of God's grace had penetrated his inmost soul; and his naturally noble character was elevated and sublimed almost above the highest permitted standard of

earthly perfection. His decline was very gradual, and he was allowed to continue with us until he had almost taught Lucy to look forward, as he did himself, beyond the dark interval of their approaching separation.

To the very last he cheered and comforted her heart,—strong himself in heavenly strength. And when she knelt beside the bed upon which he had just drawn his last breath, and had seen how mercifully he was dealt with in that last mysterious struggle; how he seemed rather sleeping more calmly than of late, than entering the cold waters of mortality; and when his last words of faith and hope, through a risen Saviour, still sounded upon her ears, she could thank her gracious Father, even with a bleeding heart, for all his dealings with her. I can never forget her appearance when I first saw her, after she had exchanged her bridal dress for the weeds of widowhood; nor can any other

events ever call again into like activity those feelings with which I watched her pursuing, day by day, her desolate path through life in quiet beauty.

There was something perfectly sublime in the support which the faith of Jesus administered to her, and often have I said within myself,—Where, in all the fancied tales of the drama, was there ever exhibited a nobler example of moral grandeur ;—she lived for others, whether it was to cheer the old man, who had none else to lean upon beside herself, or like some benignant spirit, to breathe peace and happiness over the troubled heart of any of her poor neighbours. She too was dealt with in mercy. She was granted to us for a season, to manifest in the weakness of youthful widowhood, the strength of the soul which is stayed upon God ; but she was not long delayed from her rest. Her stricken spirit did not flutter and dash itself against the walls of its prison house, but

yet in spite of this, it was evident that she would not much longer be separated from those whom she had loved so tenderly, and all of whom had one by one been transplanted before her into paradise, leaving her to bear the chills of life alone. Perhaps her constant attendance upon her husband had sowed within her too susceptible constitution the seeds of that disorder, which is the peculiar enemy of the fairest and loveliest amongst us.

It had taken long to bow down her husband's strength, but her's melted away as rapidly as the snow wreath before the suddenly awakened breath of spring. The fair flower was hardly struck, before its head drooped for ever, or rather before it was taken from earth, to bloom with new and increased beauty in the courts of the higher house of her heavenly Father. For she too died so, as rather than to begin to live, full of quiet peace, and humble faith in the Saviour of penitent transgressors.

Once more I stood over the open vault ; once more I pronounced the words of hope and resignation ; once more I turned away from the closing grave to support the tottering steps of desolate affliction.

‘ I am a poor weak old man, and as desolate as the withered bough of yonder oak,’ said Sir Henry, feebly, as he pointed my eye to the blanched and shattered arms of the tree which the bolt of heaven had struck—‘ It cannot be long before my turn comes. God grant that I too may be ready.’

Most heartily did I respond to his prayer, and many a time afterwards did I repeat it again, before the last niche in that spacious vault was filled with the earthly remains of the last of the St. Aubyn name. This was not, however, for some years afterwards : but it was a relief when it did happen. The last blow had completely sunk the feeble old man to the earth. He saw no one except myself and his few immediate attendants. He would transact no business,

and fell into a lethargy of spirit too nearly approaching to idiotcy to allow even of any apparent ripening for another world. He seldom left his study, except when the church bell summoned him to the house of prayer. It was a most affecting sight to see his tottering steps feebly supported by his stick, as he followed the winding path which brought him to the church-yard gate. He always refused assistance, or even company, as he passed along. ‘God hath made me alone,’ he would feebly say,—‘and why should I seek to alter his will?’ He sat alone in the deserted pew; and when the last stragglers of the congregation were departed, he would go to that side of the church-yard where his dead were hidden out of his sight, and after a short interval he was seen again tracing his sorrowful way home to his desolate abode. None could ever guess exactly what passed in his mind during this weekly visit, which he paid to the resting-place of those precious relics of

beloved mortality ; for there was a sacredness about the sorrows of the old man, which prevented every curious eye from risking the possibility of wounding his feelings, by lingering near the place. There was no apparent difference in his health—the flame fluttered on, but it did not seem to sink lower in the socket,—when one Sunday I missed him from his ordinary seat. I walked up to the Hall when the morning service was concluded, but I found that the thread of life was already broken. He had set out as usual at the sound of the second chime. His old attendant fancied that there was an unusual want of steadiness in his footsteps as he left the house ; and followed him with cautious affection at a little distance. He was soon certain that his apprehensions were not unfounded ; but his master had fallen ere he could reach him ; and before he could be conveyed to the Hall, the feeble spark of life was thoroughly extinguished.

Few, perhaps, can fully appreciate the feelings with which I once more performed over a member of the St. Aubyn family, the last offices of the Church of England. The affections, the pleasures, the anxieties, and the woes of life crowded upon my eye ;—the vanity of earthly honours ; the emptiness of earthly pleasures ; the hollowness of its joys ; the infinite moment of eternity ; the unspeakable mercy of redemption, were all painted before me in the clearest colours. I cannot, to this day, walk through the grass-grown court-yard of the Hall, without their forcible recurrence to my mind ; nor can I look, without similar impressions, at the hatchment which closes the long train of armorial bearings, in which the figured death's head has supplanted the honourable crest of the extinguished house.

THE GRANDFATHER.

" Such age there is, and who can wish its end ? "

" The dew of heaven is like thy grace,
It steals in silence down ;
But where it lights, the favoured place,
By richest fruits is known."

THE GRANDFATHER.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH-YARD.

As we pass on through life, the great multitude of its various scenes and impressions fade successively from our remembrance, like the dreams of a feverish night. To retrace them in their intricate abundance, and see them in the colours with which they were decked when present with us, is as impossible as it would be to remember the various forms and shades of the clouds which have passed over us. We are lost, if we attempt it, in a labyrinth of thought;

our land-marks become fainter and more obscure, till they absolutely vanish from our aching gaze ; but amidst this common blank of memory, there are some scenes which this fantastic faculty here and there selects, to preserve as indelibly as the characters graven upon a rock. To what they owe their preservation, we hardly know ; but they are certainly the clearer, and stand out in bolder relief, through the general destruction of what was once crowded round them. One of these relics of past impressions is *now* before me. It was fifteen years ago, on the 1st of June last, that I stood on the side of my garden which overlooks the church-yard, to admire the glorious prospect which it afforded me. It had been a cold and backward spring ; winter had lingered on, and its unpropitious touch had long retarded vegetation ; but the weather had suddenly altered ; the chilling mantle was withdrawn ; and in the last fortnight, all nature, animate and inanimate, seemed at once

to start into life after their wintry slumber. You might almost see the grass spring, and the trees burst into leaf. The rapidity of the change reminded me of those wintry pictures which bear in cunning art the filling up of leafless branches in hidden colours, to flush forth into their interminable variety of light and shade, as the warmth of the fire falls upon them. It was one of those beautiful evenings, when all that is softest in sound or colour seems profusely expended for the delight of man. The red rays of the sun, as his burnished glory lit up the western heavens, fell full upon the woods which rose on the further side of the village; not with that power from which at mid-day they seemed almost to sink, as too great for their tender sprays, but mellowed and softened, like the sounds of the trumpet heard over the waves. The old grey stone of the church-spire beamed on the one side with rosy light, and sunk on the other into darker shade, whilst its gilded

weather-cock, and the upper lattices of the scattered cottages, gave back like brilliants, the broken rays of the glorious luminary, The air was full of its winged tribes, humming their songs of praise as they wheeled round and round, or rose and fell, with unceasing activity, in all the full happiness of exulting animation. The village green was not yet forsaken, and the noisy mirth of its merry-hearted occupants came softly from a distance upon the evening breeze. It was impossible not to give way to the influence which was abroad. The power of evening had come over me, and I was lost in a maze of musing meditations. I was interrupted by the sound of feet, which had already advanced within a short distance before they had attracted my observation. The sound came from a sheltered corner of the church-yard, where, under the shade of an old elm, was raised the turf-covering of three recent graves. As I listened, I heard the sound of low-spoken words. The

voices were those of youth and of age, not of querulous age, nor of noisy youth—for the exuberant gaiety of the one seemed depressed by natural affliction; and the lowered tones of the other, upheld by habitual cheerfulness. Both, however, were evidently mourners. They were the only remaining members of what had been a few weeks before one of our happiest and most prosperous families. The childless old man and his orphan grandchild were now come to look at the spot to which the remains of the children of the one, and the parents of the other, had been lately borne. I watched them in silence, fearing to interrupt their conversation.

‘Can they see us, grandpapa?’ was the first word that reached my ears, ‘Do you think that they can see us?’

‘Yes, my dear, I believe that the spirits of those who have died in faith, are allowed to see what happens to those who are left behind.’

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‘ Then that is why you like to come here, is it, because you think that they are near to you here ? ’

‘ No, Ruth, they cannot be nearer to us here, than every-where else ; their souls are not buried here ; it is only their bodies which are laid here to moulder and become dust. When their bodies lay, as you saw them, cold and dead, then the spirit which had dwelt in them was gone again into God’s keeping, and there they are now, and not in their cold graves. I think they are nearest to us when we say at night those prayers in which they used to join with us ; and sing those hymns which they sang.’

‘ Then why is it that you come here ? ’

‘ Because it brings again into my mind all that I felt when we laid them in their graves ; and because I love to see that even the place where their dust lies is nicely kept and guarded.’

‘ And will they indeed become dust ? Oh then, I shall never, never see mother again.’

‘ You will never see her again here, my dear, but the time will come when God will gather together the dust of the earth, and then you will see her again with joy, if you are what she was, a servant of Jesus Christ.’ He paused for a moment, but perceiving that Ruth was still sobbing aloud, he went on. ‘ And think, too, how much happier and safer they are now, than when they had only got us to help them. When the fever became bad we could not cure the headache which made them groan, but now they are quite safe, and quite happy, and that for ever, because they are with Jesus Christ. Think of that, my love.’

The old man took the weeping child in his arms as he spoke ; and I, could see, as he pressed her to his bosom, that his own cheeks were wet with tears. There was a sacredness in their grief which I could not bear to disturb ; and fearing that they might observe me, I turned silently from the place, full of what I had just witnessed.

The last words which reached me from the lips of the old man recalled forcibly to my mind those beautiful lines which seem, like the remembrance of some sweet music, to be always present with me, when I have wept myself over the graves of beloved ones who have slept in Jesus. I could not help repeating them now, as I left the church-yard gate.

‘ We gladlier rest
Our darlings on earth’s quiet breast,
And our hearts feel they must not break.

Far better they should sleep awhile
Within the church’s shade,
Nor wake, until new heaven, new earth,
Meet for their new immortal birth,
For their abiding-place be made ;—

Than wander back to life and lean
On our frail love once more.
’Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse,
How grows in paradise our store.’

CHAPTER II.

QUIETNESS IN JOY.

ANDREW GRAY had been born in our village, and had never left it. He was a fisherman by occupation, and was a man of such a spirit as Walton would not have disowned for a brother. He had married the daughter of a neighbour for whom he had formed an early attachment, and who was not unworthy of his affection. There was not such another couple in the parish as Andrew and Ruth Gray. The cheerfulness of their tempers, and the kindness of their manners made every one their friend ; and no stranger could pass by the little garden which surrounded their cottage,

without stopping to notice and admire its beauty; for if the brightness and gaiety of its flowers did not catch the eye, the sweetness of the dame's favourite honeysuckle was sure to be wafted to them, and entice them in. The cottage stood very near to the sea-shore, sheltered by a turn of the hills from the violence of the wind; and encircled by a belt of apple trees which flourished under that protection. It was a beautiful sight in the early spring, when every spray of the orchard was powdered with its brilliant flowers, to see the little cottage smiling in the midst of them, with the annuals blooming before the door, the violets creeping along the bank; and the full buds of the early honeysuckle just promising to burst into their fragrancy and lustre; and if you went by it towards evening, it was a still more interesting object. For then you would see Ruth, who had put every thing inside and around the cottage into its cleanest and neatest order,

and brought the well-polished table from the corner of the room, and put a plain set of tea-things, their wedding present from the old Rector, out upon it, while the kettle sung upon the fire,—then you might see her sitting near the open door of the cottage busy at her work, while her little Grace, who was staying up to kiss her father, was playing near her, as both of them waited for the return of Andrew from the fishing which he had just commenced for the season. But it was not only the peacefulness of their domestic life, or the cheerfulness of their temper, which gave them an interest in my eyes: nor was it only the decency of Andrew's deportment, his regular attendance at church, or the firmness of his refusal to join in the common crime of smuggling. It was the presence of that blessed principle of love to God, from which these good fruits resulted, that I especially delighted to contemplate. They had both borne a most respectable character, even

from their childhood ; but it was not, as he often told me, until they had been sometime married, that they had truly given up their hearts altogether to God. It was a gradual work in both of them. The dews of heaven stole gently down upon their souls, converting and renewing them, in their simple and diligent attendance on the ordinary means of grace. The loss of an infant was employed by their heavenly Father, in advancing the work ; and they had long blessed him for this precious, though at the time, most severe affliction. My pleasantest and most refreshing visits were to their cottage. There is an instructive reality in the piety of such humble believers ; and in them the blessed characters of grace were not marred and blotted by the prevalence of earthly infirmity : They might be seen in all their true beauty and comeliness, as the different trials and events of common life, called them into exercise. Their days passed on for the most part in peaceful evenness :

their little Grace grew up beneath their eyes, inheriting her parent's cheerfulness, and imbibing their piety. She married a young man who had long been as a son to the Grays, and who for some time past had joined in Andrew's fishing. As they had no other child, and the cottage was roomy, it was determined that they should not separate. The happiness of the old people seemed to be complete, when they thus witnessed the security and comfort of their beloved daughter ; and it was a goodly sight for others to see them living together, in holy harmony, sanctified by faithful prayer, daily poured forth together ; or to hear them, as the evening of Sunday closed in, singing to some simple tune, a hymn of heart-felt praise.

CHAPTER III.

JOY IN SADNESS.

SUCH happiness as this rarely continues long without interruption. It is not that our Heavenly Father metes out to us our blessings grudgingly, and envies us our joys, for 'God is love;' it is that the affections, even of renewed hearts, are too earthly to bear such undisturbed happiness; if the sunshine lasted the whole day through, we should forget that the night must come; were the earth around us never moved, we should become rooted here; and his gracious purpose is to fit us for being transplanted into a better soil. The Grays had hitherto tasted little of this necessary discipline, but

the time of affliction came at last. On returning from fishing, one day, Grace's husband complained of indisposition; he grew hotter and more restless through the night, in spite of all her mother's remedies. By the succeeding evening the fever was so much increased, that it seemed necessary to send for medical advice. Gray returned with some medicine, and with the promise of a visit early the next day from the doctor himself. It was evident when he arrived, that the disease had been rapidly advancing; through the whole of the preceding night, the sick man had been delirious, and though now a little quieter he appeared to be greatly distressed. The apothecary's report was most alarming; the most violent remedies afforded but little promise of a successful application. They were tried, and prayers were mingled with them by the pious inhabitants of the cottage, that if it might be so, the cup of sorrow should be turned away. But there was not one re-

pinning word uttered, as if they had forgotten that a Father's hand had prepared the draught in mercy. Nor was a single murmur allowed to mingle with their natural sorrow, when, on the ninth day of anxiety and nursing, the worn-out frame of the young man sunk beneath the violence of the fever.

I was with them early on that day, and my tears fell with those of her who was left thus suddenly a widow; but I had cause to praise God on their behalf, as well as to seek succour for them.

The funeral was an affecting sight, many were present at it, and there were few dry eyes; when the holy prayers and blessing were over, the bystanders walked one by one to the open grave, and cast in their sprig of rosemary; some wept for the dead whom they had lost, and some for the living who were left behind, and some because all were weeping around them; but all wondered how the Grays could bear up under

such a loss. They had known their love for one another, but alas ! too many of them knew not the strength which was given to them in that trying hour, by their Lord's presence with them. It was a touching sight which met my eyes, when I walked down to the cottage in the evening, in order to speak some words of consolation to the mourners. The little Ruth was dressed in deep, though common black, and the widow's cap clung closely round the brows of her almost girlish mother.

There is something peculiarly affecting in a little child arrayed in the garments of mourning. Their innocent mirth or wondering sadness contrasts so strangely with the heart-broken grief of the elder sharers of their dress of sorrow ; they are so innocently insensible to the loss they have sustained. This was very much the impression produced upon me by seeing the little Ruth playing by her mother's side. Not that she was small enough to be altogether insensible ;

—but thoughts of sorrow could not abide in that young heart—sin and care had not yet made room for them, and death itself was more like some sad dream which her mother's kiss robbed of its terrors, than that bitter reality which smote to the heart of the bereaved Grace. She was just beginning to realize her situation. The blow had stunned her at first:—she had fallen, but almost without sense of pain, so sharp had been the stroke; but now she had awoke to a full sense of her loneliness in life;—yet even in this hour of sadness, she was supported. There was one walking with her in the fire, and “His form was like the Son of God.” We prayed together, and gathered fresh strength as we spoke to Him who is the comforter of those that mourn. I could easily perceive that her whole heart was poured out in earnest supplication. I left the cottage with my thoughts full of her; and tempted at times to gaze with a sickening eye upon the years of loneliness

which might lie before one so young, and, with the exception of her aged parents, so solitary in this populous world. Little did I know how soon those who had been so rudely parted, would be re-united; or the badge of widowhood exchanged for the crown of salvation. On the very next morning, the fever which had laid her husband low, and which from its malignant character had been highly infectious, appeared in her. From the first it defied all resistance;—and having less strength to overcome, it executed its commission in a much shorter time than in her husband's case. The fellow rose-bud to that which she had laid in his coffin, was not too far opened to be put by her mother in her own; the ground was scarcely settled over him, when it was again disturbed to receive into its keeping, her who had been so lately the deepest mourner at his grave, and who was now laid down peacefully with the same words of faith and hope, to rest for awhile by

his side. It was a hard trial to the old people. They had joined their hands in holy wedlock, and now they lived to join their dust together beneath the church-yard elm. But "it was the Lord"—and they had served him long enough to know that he "doeth all things well." The angel of death had not yet, however, accomplished his work. The fatal effects of nursing her daughter were soon seen in the aged mother—full of faith and of hope, she breathed her last—and within a few days, the hushed, though heavy tread of the bearers of mortality again approached the burying-place of the Gray's. Two of the family were left: joyfully would the old man have heard the summons for himself to follow those who were gone, could he have taken with him that unprotected little one—but she was spared, and he was left to watch over her—with the docility of a child he received his master's charge; and though his heart was weighed down with natural grief, yet cheer-

fully did he set out its due performance. Andrew had reached that time of life at which he was expecting gradually to retire from his fatiguing toil. His own personal earnings would almost support himself and his wife through the remaining stages of their journey; and it had been his hope that he might soon resign his business into the younger and stronger hands of his daughter's husband. But this hope had now vanished, and without a murmur, the old man prepared to go through all the labour which lay before him. Sickness and death had drained his store; and the little orphan of his family must look to him for every thing. He spoke of all this to me with cheerful submission.

‘Thank God, Sir, I have health and strength enough yet, and with his blessing I may buffet it on for many a day.’

‘You will be sadly lonely, I am afraid, neighbour,’ said one to him, ‘in the boat by yourself.’

‘ Thank you, James, for thinking of me, but how can a man be alone, if The Blessed One is with him : I am never less lonely than when I am with my own thoughts.’

He set diligently about his usual occupations. He confided his little Ruth through the day to the care of a neighbour, whose piety and judgment he could trust ; but as soon as ever he reached home he sought her, and brought her to the cottage. It was delightful to see the ruggedness of man’s nature charmed out of him by her infantine simplicity ; he tended her like the most gentle nurse, and she lay down to rest peacefully, because it was by his side, and because she had just said some hymn which he had taught her, and bowed her knee with him to lisp her heart’s early prayer. The only sad time in her day was when he left her, and its brightest moment was when she was again summoned by his voice. Sunday was her day of joy, because he was not obliged to go to sea and leave her ; their

nook at church was never empty, nor was any other filled by a truer worshipper. Such was their life until she was old enough to be taken with him in the boat when the weather was calm ; or to be left in charge of the cottage, and allowed to busy herself in preparing for his return. Her character was opening into lovely proportion. There was an exquisite sweetness of temper, and an overflowing exuberance of spirit, which shielded her from the dangers incident to her peculiar situation. She was neither dull nor forward : her downcast look and deepened blushes whenever she excited observation, gave sufficient evidence of her freedom from obtrusiveness ; and you could not hear the full-hearted joyousness of her merry laugh, without feeling that there had been no chill to repress the early spring of her spirit. There was that, moreover, in which old Andrew even more rejoiced ;—the opening promise of early piety. She loved to sit upon his knee, and read with him in

the great old-fashioned Bible which gathered no dust on his shelf. She loved, before she went to bed, to kneel by his bed-side, and with her little hands clasped together to join in the fervent prayers which he offered up to God. She had a sweet voice too, and had learned several simple tunes ; and more than once I have heard her singing from the stern of his returning boat, in the quiet of the evening, some holy hymn which he had taught her. If I was seen, the song ceased in a moment, for there was nothing like display about them. It was only by stealth that I could ever be a witness to the Christian beauty of their quiet lives. I shall never forget one such time, when accident made me an observer of their happy piety. It was the evening of a summer's day of unequalled beauty. There had not been a cloud to dim the clear blue of heaven. The heat had been very great, and as the sun declined, a light breeze breathed over the surface of the waves. I had walked out

to visit a sick man—alas! it was the house of the swearer to which I had been called. He had long been a hardened offender, one who in health had often scorned my voice; but sickness and the approach of death will bow the haughtiest spirits. He was glad to see me; and I had been with him frequently: but I could trace no marks whatever of the workings of the blessed Spirit of God, which alone can give repentance. Fear he had abundantly—at times awfully—present with him, but sorrow for sin I could not perceive, even in its lowest degree. He abhorred, indeed, his former sins, but, alas, with little or nothing of penitent abhorrence. The state of his mind continually reminded me of the words which the venerable Bishop Ken puts into the mouth of the dying sinner:

‘Ye worldly comforts which me captive led,
In my distress,—O whether are ye fled?
If you approach me, ’tis not to condole,
But only to insult my flitting soul.
Ye crowd upon my heart, pollute my prayer,
Ye tempt me to take refuge in despair.’

His heart was like a hard rock, which the fire of affliction had broken violently into shivers, but not one fragment of which it had softened. It was a painful sight to witness the strugglings of his natural mind. It seemed in vain that I endeavoured to raise within him any holy or penitent desires ; —there was no dew nor rain from the Lord. Still I persevered : and I begged of him to pray, knowing that if he prayed in sincerity, he would surely be heard, even though he had so long resisted the gracious Spirit of God. I had just left his cottage with a heavy heart, and was led on by the beauty of the evening, till I had reached the shore. I sat down by the side of a vast mass of rock, which projected into the sea. Often in storm and tempest had I watched the furious waves spend their strength upon that immoveable barrier, and toss themselves high in spray above it ; but now the quiet waters slept around it—sometimes just swelling over it, with a ripple as gentle as an

infant's play; floating the sea-weed which was rooted to its side into endless combinations of elegance and beauty, and then sinking down, whilst from every crevice in the rock rushed down the silvery threads of the returning wave. As I was watching the beauty of the scene, I heard a child's voice singing near me. I looked out cautiously, and saw the little Ruth, who had prepared everything for Andrew in the cottage, and was now come down to the shore to meet him. He was rather later than usual, and she had seated herself on the shingle beach to wait for his return. She was whiling away the time in singing a favourite hymn which the old man had taught her. It was a striking combination of sights and sounds, and I sat in full enjoyment of the simple harmony of the unconscious child. The rude verses which I caught were these :

Oh Jesus ! Lord of earth and heaven,
To thee we lift our eyes ;
To thee be praise and blessing given,
From all beneath the skies.

We see thy gracious love and power,
The wants of all, supply ;
The wailing sea-birds on the shore
To thee their Maker cry.

And still upon thy glorious throne,
Thy people are thy care ;
Then deign our humble praise to own,
And hear the fisher's prayer.

For thou of old did'st often stand,
And teach beside the sea ;
And thou did'st choose thy faithful band,
By the waves of Galilee.

And thou did'st bless the fisher's toil,
And share their homely food ;
And calm for them the sea's turmoil
When tossed upon the flood.

Then hear us, Lord, and keep us now,
For unto thee we pray ;
Be thou our guard : our pilot thou,
Upon the watery way.

Oh ! hear the fisher's child,
Who prays for him to thee ;
And guard him 'mongst the breakers wild,
Of the rough and stormy sea.

Oh ! shield his boat from ill ;
And bless him in his store ;
For upon such thou lookest still,
As thou did'st look of yore.

She ceased her song, and at the same moment I heard the quiet sighing of the waves disturbed by the hissing noise of the sparkling bubbles which foamed round the prow of the fisherman's boat, as it shot round the rocky headland on my right hand. A few strokes of the oar brought it to land.

I watched their happy greeting. I heard the eager inquiries, in answer to which the child learned what had been the fisherman's success. It was a subject for Claude. The broad disk of the setting sun was just kissing the waves, his red rays streaming across the water in a path of glory, fell full upon the little boat, and the two figures busied by its side, and lit up the rocks which girded the coast, as well as the trees which could be seen through a narrow defile creeping up a distant hill. I watched them until the boat was drawn up to its usual place—the fish put into their baskets—the old man and his little one each loaded in proportion to their strength—and both returning with pious cheerfulness, to what would have been in the case of too many others, their solitary and unhappy home. The sight I had just seen, was forcibly contrasted with the miserable state of the dying man whom I had so lately left. What would these have been in life without the fear of God? What would

he be now in death with it? Surely, the way of heavenly wisdom has not been overmuch commended. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

CHAPTER IV.

REST AT LAST.

OLD Andrew's appearance had undergone a great change when he came to me one morning more than twelve years after this time. They had indeed laid lightly upon him the load of increasing infirmity; but constant labour had bent his upright form, and there was a trembling about his hand, and a sinking of the eye, to which of old he had been a stranger. 'Ah! sir, the burden of years begins to press a little upon me; but thank God! who has given me many helps to bear up under it. Surely,' he continued, 'goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.'

He soon informed me of the especial object of his visit; it was to announce to me what I had already heard from common report, that Ruth, the staff of his age, was about to marry a young man in every way worthy of her. My congratulations were sincere.

‘Thank you, Sir, thank you for all your kindness to me; and thank God! who has put it into your heart to be kind to me!’

‘Where are they to live, Andrew?’

‘In the old house, Sir, and now they will take care of me, for I mean to give up my boat altogether into William’s hands.’ His voice trembled, and he wiped away a big tear which stood in the corner of each eye. ‘God has been very good to me, Sir, in bringing all this about, for I have been tempted lately to have strange fears of leaving my poor Ruth without any friend; and yet, Sir, the tears will come into my eyes at times, when I think of it, for this is just how my old mistress and I used to speak

these many years back, when our Grace was going to be married. Well! she has long been better off than ever she would have been in this world. God give me such an end as her's was, and as soon as it is his will, now that I am not wanted here any more.'

The devout prayer of the old saint was not very speedily answered. He lived to give away his grand-daughter. He lived to see her walking in the footsteps of her mother, to lean upon her affection as upon the tenderness of a daughter beloved, and to be delighted with the innocent prattle of her children, who loved no seat better than old Andrew's knee, and no amusement more, than to listen to his oft-repeated stories. In those calm hours which belong

"To weary men when age is won,"

he had an unusual portion of sunshine: the mellowed light of a setting sun, but of a sun which promises to rise again with renovated lustre. Not a mist hung round

its setting ; not a cloud was there to dim its course. His body was prepared for death by calm and gradual decay, as his mind was fitted for another world, by increasing spirituality of affections. The flame of life rather sunk within him, than was suddenly extinguished by disease. Painlessly in body, and humbly joyful in spirit, he ceased to breathe, and fell asleep in Jesus.

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